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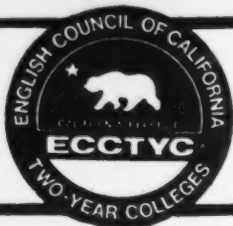
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ABSTRACT

Designed primarily for English faculty at two-year colleges in California, "Inside English" includes articles on major instructional, curricular, administrative, and employment issues of concern to teachers in the field as well as information on the activities of the English Council of the California Two-Year Colleges (ECCTYC). The Fall 1976, Spring 1977, and Special Statewide Conference issues include the following feature articles: (1) "Board of Governors Is Listening... And Waiting," by Jean Trapnell and Elizabeth Manning Deedy, which discusses the role of the State Board for Community Colleges in strengthening English and humanities instruction in the California community colleges; (2) "Collective Bargaining," by Elliot Roberts, which summarizes a conference discussion about the designation of chairpersons as faculty, supervisory, or management; (3) "Grading Standards and Graduation Requirements," by Gertrude S. Fujii, which explores factors related to the pervasive trend toward inflated grades and possible solutions; (4) "English Literacy One More Time," by Jack Swenson, which reviews recent articles in the popular media about freshman literacy; (5) "One-to-One: Garrison Method," by Bonnie C. Robinson, which explains the use of Roger Garrison's method of composition tutoring; (6) "Essay Testing a Success: Placement Changes," by Judith R. Hert, and "Rationale for New Approach," by Harold Harris, which describe and defend the new English Placement System initiated at San Bernardino Valley College; (7) "The Second R in Crisis: Reversing the Decline in American Literacy," by Ross W. Winterowd; (8) "My Blood Ran Cold," by Mel Applebaum, which relates student responses to reading "In Cold Blood" in a remedial reading class; and (9) "Eliminating Theme Correction Symbols While Emphasizing Thought Processes," by Katherine Hondius, suggests a method of bringing writing problems to students' attention without identifying exactly what the problems are, forcing students to analyze their own writing. (AYC)



inside english

Journal of the English Council of California Two-Year Colleges

FALL 1976

SPECIAL STATEWIDE CONFERENCE
ISSUE

AND

SPRING 1977

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The Journal of the English Council
of the California Two-Year Colleges

Fall Issue 1976

ENGLISH LITERACY ONE MORE TIME

By Jack Swenson, Canada College

By now I'm sure most English teachers are sick of the subject of college freshmen literacy. I want to get in a last word if possible to clear up in my own mind at least a number of questions related to the issue. I teach freshman English and I'm miffed because *Newsweek* and *The Wall Street Journal* knew my students couldn't write before I did.

First, what caused the furor? The issue keeps popping up from time to time. Why the public latched on so firmly this time around is a matter of speculation. Plausible answers are that the media did a good job of fueling the flames, and the taxpaying public was ready for an educational Watergate. Since those two fellows who work for the *Washington Post* did such a job on Nixon, the media have been taking their role as guardian of public morals very seriously. I am not criticizing the media for exposing corruption in government; on the contrary, good for them. But regarding the literacy issue, they are guilty of creating a "crisis" where one does not exist. The public was primed for the news, eager to believe, and along with teachers and businessmen who raised the issue in the first place, ready to cry out against an additional example of misspent tax money. I am a taxpayer, too, and I don't like the way the government spends the 25 percent they cut out of my pay. Like other citizens, I feel helpless to do anything about it. Washington, D.C. is too distant and incomprehensible to provide a viable target for frustrated taxpayers' ire. Teachers, local school boards, and state education budgets are close at hand.

Second, is there any substance to the controversy in the first place? True, Johnny doesn't write very well. He

never has been any great shakes. In some ways college freshmen today write less well than students of a previous age, in some ways they write better. The change certainly does not justify the charge that they are "semiliterate." *Newsweek*, which supplied the term, later dropped the "semi" in labeling the current state of affairs "the new illiteracy" (*Newsweek*, Dec. 8, 1975). Studies seem to support the contention that today's students are deficient in writing fundamentals. A teacher with twelve years of experience, I cannot honestly say whether or not my students today are better or worse at organizing ideas, spelling, and getting the commas in the right place. If the studies are correct, probably they have suffered in mastery of fundamentals. On the other hand, since the late sixties students' writing has reflected some healthy characteristics that are hard to measure by studies and tests.

Students today are weak where their predecessors were strong, strong where their predecessors were weak. Weaknesses are in grammar, punctuation, and mechanics. Strengths are in the lively, direct, and idiomatic nature of their prose. The reason for this shift is that teachers, students, and society have changed in the last decade. Teachers gave up on drill and repetition as a means of fostering writing skills after thirty years of studies proved that these skills couldn't be taught that way. Students in the 1960's proved to be less docile, and resisted traditional means of writing instruction. Sociological events during this period tended to downgrade paternalism and rules, make creativity and self-expression the order of the day. The results of all these changes

were partly good, partly bad. Students have to live in the real world, and the ability to communicate is a valued skill, in school and on the job. But good prose is a combination of many qualities, including fundamentals but by no means excluding everything else. We need to take a hard look at our definition of literacy.

A third question is what can be done to make Johnny write better? He may not be as bad off as *Newsweek* or John Doe, taxpayer, think, but he does have problems. Articles on the subject offer many solutions, most of them workable with some students some of the time. The reactions of the four-year colleges and universities have been appalling. Bonehead English has been resurrected. Drill and repetition are the order of the day. What is worst about the knee-jerk reactions of English departments at the post-secondary level is that not only are their programs anachronistic, their claims of success are suspicious if not false. According to the media, "educators in California report success in improving the writing skills of students who take subject A." (*Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 3, 1974). The criteria of measurement are significantly omitted. A more candid conclusion is admitted in the *New York Times* (March 7, 1976).

The effectiveness of remedial education, however, is a subject of great controversy. The supporters of such programs are not aided by reports like the one at City University's Baruch College, which concluded that "a majority of students improve very little in writing ability regardless of the instructional mode."

If Johnny's writing is going to get well, some hard facts have to be faced.

One is that mere muscle-flexing at the college and university level is not going to do much to improve high school graduates' ability to handle the language. Bonehead English is something left over from the dark ages. And the old dodge of grading hard at the beginning of the course, easier at the end, to "prove success," is hypocritical.

Johnny, himself, is a hard case. There is a lot of wisdom in the old saw, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." In general, Johnny is a whole lot less worried about his literacy than are his parents and teachers. It is true that some college students, deficient in writing fundamentals, are highly motivated to learn the skills they lack. But this is not typical. Generally, college freshmen are uncertain regarding their own motives and goals. Few see the relevance of ordinary college English writing assignments to their personal lives. This attitude may be a product of a shift in educational teaching and philosophy, as Judith Plotz suggests in her thoughtful article on plagiarism in a recent issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Regardless, college freshmen can take only so much "writing instruction" without their eyes glazing. What teachers must do is take Johnny for what he is. They must understand that he is fuzzy about personal goals, suspicious of education as well as other institutions, and defensive about his inadequacies as a writer among other things. We can club him into conformity with tests and grades, or we can encourage his strengths and offer reasonable alternatives that will allow him to remedy his writing weaknesses if he wants to.

cont. on page 8

ECCTYC President's Column

LOOKING

AHEAD →



Through my columns in this journal over the past few years, I have attempted to discuss problems that those of us in two-year college English face in California. I have also attempted to define the goals and to describe the activities of ECCTYC. In this first issue of the academic year 1976-7, I would like to look to the future rather than to the past. One fact seems established; ECCTYC is here to stay. I think there are two good reasons for this.

First, you will remember that the main thrust of our organization is not political, self-perpetuating, or self-adulating. The president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and all other executive members who are not directors nor assistant directors exist and function completely and merely for the good of their regional directors, assistant regional directors, and the English chairpersons and faculty whom these regions administer. Moreover, by having departmental subscription rates and by avoiding individual memberships, we accept every two-year college English instructor in California as a member of ECCTYC. Most individual members have had the benefit of receiving our journal, *Inside English*, and most members have had the opportunity to attend interesting and valuable regional meetings situated in accessible locales. In times when department travel allowances are steadily decreasing, our original aim of providing such conferences and their very important interchange of ideas, problems, and solutions seems ever more viable.

Second, this organization has remained vigorous and effective entirely through the interest, enthusiasm, and hard work of its officers. They deserve the credit for improving and expanding an idea whose time had quite obviously "come."

It is my sincere hope that our regional conferences will become so well-established that our next logical step will be to mount a statewide conference in two-year college English or perhaps two of them—one for northern and one for southern California. With such future expansion of conferences in mind, we will give this November 12-13 at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel in San Francisco, a statewide conference for two-year college chairpersons of English and humanities departments. Our response to this conference has been most gratifying; over 60 reservations were received by press time. I even received telephone calls from two chairpersons who wished to bring along a substantial number of their faculty. Unfortunately, the room reservation block dictated that we only invite chairpersons at this time. At this meeting we shall undoubtedly make plans for expanded conferences, and our next issue of *Inside English* bring all of you more information along these lines.

Certainly the activities I have mentioned are reason for encouragement, and with your continued support there is no place to go but on and up.

Don Snapp, CCSF

Statewide ECCTYC Conference Assembles In San Francisco

On November 12 and 13, chairpersons from community college English departments throughout California will convene at San Francisco's Sir Francis Drake Hotel for their first statewide conference. During the two days of general and small group meetings, the participants will consider current issues of interest to English department heads. Of prime concern will be the issue of student writing skills and the implications for community college English programs of the recent public outcry over the alleged poor writing performance of California college students.

Speaking at the opening session on Friday will be two key members of the California State University and College Task Force on Student Writing Skills, Dr. Tony Moyer and Dr. Edward White. On Friday evening, literacy and composition will also be the topic of the keynote address to be presented by Dr. Harry Finestone of C.S.U., Northridge. Dr. Finestone will touch upon several aspects of the composition crisis including ways in which college English departments may have unknowingly contributed to the problem.

In the numerous small group discussion, chaired by members of ECCTYC's executive council, par-

ticipants will share their views and concerns informally on a variety of scheduled topics, such as in-service programs, use of part-time instructors, graduation requirements, decline of enrollment in literature classes, and the implication for chairpersons of collective bargaining. Another series of informal discussion groups will provide chairpersons the opportunity to raise issues and explore problems that have not been prescheduled. The purpose of having small groups is to provide as much variety as possible during a short period of time so that participants will be able to exchange views on those topics of most personal concern.

Another general meeting on Saturday morning will be devoted to a presentation by representatives and participants from the Bay Area Writers Project, a unique program designed to encourage improved teaching of composition at all levels. The conference concludes Saturday afternoon at a luncheon meeting addressed by Mrs. Jean Trapnell of the California Board of Governors of Community Colleges. Mrs. Trapnell, herself a retired English instructor and department chairperson, will speak about ways in which the State Board of Governors can provide leadership for improving humanities programs.

Conference Speaker

Finestone: Involved Expert

Harry Finestone, Professor of English at C.S.U. Northridge, was promoting sound writing programs at all levels of education in California long before he became a member of the California State University and Colleges Task Force on Student Writing Skills.

After completing his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago and teaching both abroad and in the East, Dr. Finestone came to California State University Northridge in 1962. There he has taught 19th and 20th century American Literature and given courses

on William Faulkner, Henry James, Afro-American fiction and art criticism and has served as Chairman of English.

A member of several professor advisory and steering committees, Dr. Finestone has also served as President of the English Council of the California State Universities and Colleges and Director of the National Seminar for English Department Chairmen. He has contributed regularly to professional journals and is co-editor of several successful college texts, including the *Conscious Reader* (MacMillan, 1974).

Write for the
Spring Issue
of *i.e.*



Jean Trapnell To Address ECCTYC Conference

Jean Trapnell, a member of the Board of Governors of California Community Colleges since 1975, came to California from New York in the forties. Soon thereafter she became active in groups that had decisive impact on the educational climate of Los Angeles. Elected citywide chairman of the League of Women Voters' Education Committee in Los Angeles, Mrs. Trapnell succeeded in pressing for increased placement of black teachers in all-white schools and for full academic programs and counseling in East side schools. As President of the Family-School Alliance, University Elementary School, she led parents and faculty in getting the Legislature and Regents to bring the school to the UCLA campus. Later, Mrs. Trapnell joined the faculty of Los Angeles Valley College, where she was Professor of English and eventually chaired the English Department.

Upon retiring from teaching Mrs. Trapnell started going regularly to the meetings of the L.A. Community College Board of Trustees. Disturbed by much of what she heard, she began to turn out a weekly report on the proceedings, which were eventually subsidized by the College Guild & C.T.A. These reports led to *The Trapnell Report* now subsidized by Women For and numerous private subscriptions as well as teacher groups. The *Trapnell Report* has a circulation of 800 which increased during elections to 1200-2000.

At the time she began observing and reporting on the L.A. Board Meetings, Mrs. Trapnell met Jerry Brown, then himself a board member, whom she grew to admire. Later, when Brown ran for state office, she challenged him to make public his view on education. "I have it all in my notes," she said. Brown did not comply immediately,

but this challenge may have led to Mrs. Trapnell's later participation in preparing campaign material for Brown.

Now a member of the Steering Committee of Women For and Steering Committee Chairperson of the Academic Committee of the Democratic Party in California, Mrs.

Trapnell was also a delegate to the Collective Bargaining Convention for Higher Education in 1973.

Her plans for the future include getting back into teaching now and then. She would most like to do a course on Aldous Huxley, whom she sees as an important prophetic 20th century author.

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Helen Mills, American River College

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Available for examination December 1976.
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Helen Mills, American River College
Consulting Editor: Wayne Harsh, University of California, Davis

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David E. Fear, Valencia Community College

This basic text features thorough coverage of the fundamentals of technical writing and oral communication with applications to technical and business situations. Summary abstracts for each chapter, plan sheets, chapter on how to use illustrations, and a useful grammar handbook help students become technically correct. March 1977, 416 pages, illustrated, soft, approx. \$5.95, with Instructor's Manual.

For further information write to Jennifer Toms, Department SA
Scott, Foresman College Division
1900 East Lake Avenue
Glenview, Illinois 60025



ECCTYC CONFERENCE FOR ENGLISH CHAIRPERSONS

November 12 - 13, 1976
Hotel Sir Francis Drake
San Francisco

Friday November 12

- Morning Conference registration, sign-up for small group discussions, secure accommodations
- 1:00-2:45 General Meeting
1) Welcoming remarks (Don Snepp)
2) Conference orientation (John Coates)
3) Report on CSU Task Force proposals for English Proficiency Exams (Dr. Moyer and Dr. White)
(Coffee-2:30) 4) Questions from floor and open discussion regarding Task Force report (Moderator: Virgil Sessions)

3:00-4:00

- Discussion Groups
1) Collective bargaining and its implications for the chairperson. (Leader: Elliot Roberts)
2) What to do about declining enrollment in literature courses. (Leader: Pat Barney)
3) Re-evaluating grading standards and graduation requirements (Leader: Gertrude Fujii)
4) Implications of the current political scene in Sacramento for future English programs at the community college. (Leader: Shirley Middleton)

(Coffee ?)

4:00-5:00

- Small Group Open Exchanges (No designated topic) (Leaders: McIntosh, Mognis, Meyer, Duerr)

6:30

- No Host Cocktail Party

7:30

- Banquet (Masters of Ceremonies - Don Snepp)

8:30

- Keynote address: Dr. Harry Finestone, CSU Northridge, "The Composition Crisis"

Saturday November 13

9:00-9:45

- Discussion Groups
1) Implications of increased employment of part-time faculty (Leader: Virgil Sessions)
2) Innovations: curriculum, techniques, etc. A sharing session (Leader: Mike Seeley)
3) Writing and Reading Labs (Leader: Donna Willoughby)
(Coffee-9:45-10:15) 4) Making in-service programs appealing and productive (Leader: John Coates)

10:15-11:15

- General Meeting
Bay Area Writers Project - A Panel Discussion (Leader: Marlene Griffith, Participants: James Gray and Jan Wall)

11:00-12:00

- Small Group Open Exchanges (No designated topics) (Leaders: Dorn, Gill, Booth, Hatoff)

12:30

- Luncheon General Meeting (Mistress of Ceremonies: Gertrude Fujii)
Speaker: Ms. Jean Trapnell, State Board of Governors for Community Colleges, Topic "State Board Leadership in English and Humanities"
Closing remarks (Don Snepp)

Garrison Method

One - To - One

by Bonnie C. Robinson



There were certain disadvantages to the way I was teaching composition: it was rare that every member of the class participated in the discussion of "Civil Disobedience"; it was rare that every student needed a brief lecture on the delights of the semicolon; it was rare that I left campus with a less than loaded briefcase and even more rare that I got the whole stack graded. I was haunted with the guilt of those ungraded essays and by a faint gnawing question as to whether it was all worth doing anyway. So I dug in deeper and soon I had a computer program that would explain each mark on a student's paper and, remembering he had made the error before, would assign him review work. Still the A student in her despair could not try.

For me, Roger Garrison's approach to teaching composition made my involvement in human communication much more efficient and humane. The best way to learn Garrison's methods and principles is to invite him to campus for a presentation. After participating in a three- or five-minute mock conference under Garrison's direction, composition teachers will usually be convinced that they are quick, capable editors who can effectively guide a student in a short period. The second-best way to learn Roger Garrison's method is to read his article "One-to-One Tutorial Instruction in Freshman Composition" from *Implementing Innovative Instruction: New Directions for Community Colleges*, Vol II, No. 1, Spring 1974.

Of course, the variety of community colleges, the heterogeneity of our population, and the individual preferences of instructors require modifications in the program. I have been using this method for two years now in both my non-transfer and transfer courses and find it especially suitable to classes where the spread of abilities is broad. Although I am still reworking much, I am glad to share how I have adapted Garrison's methods to Freshman Composition.

As Garrison does, I have the student complete an introduction form that tells me his interests. At the second class meeting, he writes an in-class essay in which most of his strengths and problem areas are usually apparent. (I file this essay and give it back to him as part of a final examination in which he demonstrates he is now his own editor--of course, he may ask me questions, check old notes, and use his handbook and dictionary.) At this point, Garrison assigns essays related to student interest and diagnosed needs. With 30 to 35 students and a wide variety of majors, I am not yet prepared to do this for all assignments. Some of my early assignments are somewhat lock-step although the student still picks the

subject. For example, the whole class may write practice essay exams. However, one or two assignments which the student may work on at any time are labeled "choice." The student clears his self-assignment with me first and then may write a report from work experience, a precis for psychology, or even a proposal of marriage. The criterion is that the motivation be his. Also, in conference with a student, I may assign him a writing exercise to focus on one problem. For example, Garrison's cure for multi-syllabic floods is to require the student to write a paragraph in one syllable words.

To keep the focus on the writing, I give no letter grades until the seventh week. In conference, I will write "done" in the record indicating a paper has met minimal requirements and is at least a C. After the seventh week, a student may ask what letter grade I would give a "done" paper, and if he is not satisfied with the grade, he can ask how to improve it. At the end of the semester, he submits his three best papers for two-thirds of his grade. Thus the student is not penalized for what he does not know at the beginning of the course.

In place of the research paper, Garrison uses small "search and find" papers which give students practice with basic research and bibliography form. (Someday, at my college, the research paper may be taught in a separate short course and freshman composition will be free of it.) At present, I still require one long paper, which counts as one-third of the course, because students still have to produce research papers for other courses. The step-by-step procedure with strict due dates and the constant monitoring and assistance in conferences helps eliminate many problems. The first research paper grade counts one-sixth and a limited rewrite counts one-sixth (an a paper does not have to be rewritten and others are rewritten as necessary). I still take the research paper home (but it's the only one). Also I read it the night before the scheduled conference with the student and I use a dittoed check list to guide our discussion.

Due dates on the research paper are very strict, but deadlines for the other essays are very flexible. The student may have more than one essay going at any time. If he is stuck on one, he can work on another until conference time when we can examine the problem. He can see by the schedule how many possible conferences he has and he knows he has to have all assignments "done." If he is interested in the grade or in his writing, it's to his advantage to get all the help he can. Roger computes the final grade on quantity and quality. I have every student produce a minimum quantity and I base the final

grade on quality alone.

Now to logistics. I meet with the class as a group on one day at the beginning of the week and set that day as a lecture-discussion day. When my class was 25 students, I arranged to have conference-lab hours at four other times. That means six or seven guaranteed conferences per hour. (Now that my class size is 30 or more, I work in one more hour.) Students are obligated to come to the lecture-discussion day, to at least one conference per week, and at least one lab day. The conference-lab time has to be in a classroom because it gives students a working place, it provides the school with student-contact hours, and it speeds up the time between conferences. Garrison does away with lecture discussion very early and has only conferences days. I find I need one day for "general housekeeping," for general concepts, and perhaps for my own and my students' security. Garrison has a writing room where he has his materials for individualized assignments; I have a big file box I can haul around if necessary.

haul around if necessary. But finally, to the real joy of the process--the conference. I keep the first papers quite short because some time must be spent on the affective element. However, students soon accept that I am their friendly editor (not the judge till the last). By the second conference, students have questions, and then we are both actively involved with their papers. Following Roger's checklist, I read first for detail, then order, focus (emphasis and coherence), sentences, and diction. If there is no content, it is silly to polish nothing, so the student goes back to work on lists of details until he has something. By the time we reach the last two--sentences and diction, the student, because he has something to say and a direction to his saying, is less apt to have tangled sentences. He, also, by the third draft, has become tired of spelling a word two ways and has conceded and looked it up. We are no longer cutting up his paper and making it bleed red; we are blue-pencil polishing a piece that is worth working on.

The responsibility for the writing is where it belongs--with the writer. He packs his own papers around and keeps carbons if he's wise. His first responsibility is to have something to say. No amount of the teacher's noting in the margin "needs specific detail" can get the detail as well as asking the student specific questions about his material and helping him discover and respect the particular. It seems to me in this method, that my attention and skill are really focused on the stuff and order of communication. One student said, "You're the first teacher that ever

cared about what I have to say." I'm sure that's not true, but when we mark up the "how" so heavily, it does look as if we don't care about the "what." The answer is not to give up the how, but just simply to place it later.

When we are polishing an essay, the student has with him a handbook and a prescription sheet (an alphabetical list of grammatical and rhetorical material and where it is available on our campus). I may assign DangMod--a computer drill--if dangling modifiers seem to be his favorite error. At the next conference, I can tell whether or not he understood the concept by how well he repaired his sentence. At Golden West College, we have concentrated on producing many short, single-concept programs--such as a computer drill on homonyms, a videotape on coherence, and a slide-tape package on apposition, so I take advantage of these. Furthermore, I keep on library reserve books such as Altick's *Preface to Critical Reading* for strong students who are ready for some challenges.

Because of these sources and because the student is right beside me, I don't over-explain or under-explain. What would have been a long, long handwritten note at midnight on a take-home paper is sometimes a short question and a quick, "Oh yeah, I gotta rewrite this whole section." Sometimes simply making a check on the paper prompts a student to say, "I shifted my point of view again didn't I? I really thought I had proofread for that." Since my purpose from the beginning of the course is to become obsolete, each step the student takes towards being his own editor is good.

Perhaps best of all--when a student does create a metaphor that brings goose flesh--"The moon like a steel ball" in the Vietnam sky. I can tell him "that's good," "that's strong," and the student believes me. He can see me.

At the beginning I explain to my students the disadvantages: there is not much discussion of essays and this I regret and miss; there is not much formal sharing with fellow students though I am working on some peer criticism and there does seem to be informal sharing in the lab, and finally the responsibility to produce is theirs. However, the advantages I tell them are one-to-one tutorial help in writing and an opportunity to strengthen their own voices. It's easier because of the help; it's harder because of the expectations.

For me, the reward of working with a student on his paper instead of working on a student with his paper has meant that I look forward to teaching freshman composition. My heart and my briefcase are lighter, and I believe my students are better served.

Garrison Workshop At O.C.C.



On January 7 and 8, Orange Coast College English department is sponsoring a Workshop for Teaching Writing by Roger W. Garrison.

Mr. Garrison is a professional writer, long time two year college teacher and administrator, and former staff associate for faculty with the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges. He is now director of Special Programs, Westbrook College, Maine.

The Workshop emphasizes the process of teaching writing: the development of the instructor's skill in diagnosis, prescription, and guidance, especially for marginal students. Each participant will be taught to handle more students with less effort than he typically can using traditional methods.

Among other specific things, participants will learn:

1. How to create appropriate diagnostic assignments and use them effectively.
2. How to develop individualized writing sequences for each student;
3. How to give each student immediate feedback on his work person to person;
4. How to conduct and use the three to five minute interview;
5. How and when to use literature as a teaching tool in a writing class;
6. How to teach the student to teach himself.

The workshop is open to college instructors of composition. The registration fee is \$35.00. For further information, contact John Coates, Asst. Chairperson, Literature and Languages; Orange Coast College, 2701 Fairview Road, Costa Mesa, CA, 92626 - telephone (714) 556-5595.

What's 4 1/2" x 7" and covers the most common errors made in the English language?

THE LITTLE ENGLISH HANDBOOK, 2nd Ed.
Choices and Conventions

Edward P. J. Corbett,
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Editorial Comment On: CLASS LOAD

Envision for a moment an office aglow with polished wood and warmed by the presence of oft-read volumes: Shakespeare and Shaw, Dickens and Voltaire. Even Dante smiles down from his divine perch on the shelf, his pages worn. The furniture adds comfort to the room; the sturdiness of the chairs is reassuring. And the curtains are drawn back to reveal the landscaped greenery of a magic campus replete with sculptured buildings and tiny bridges crisscrossing a small stream.

Now add characters to the scene: a community college president, a dean of instruction, and an English department chairperson. They can be men or women, it makes no difference. But they must be congenial, and they must be perfectly compatible. There is no room for biases or petty conflicts in this fairy tale. These folks are friends.

Listen to them and you'll be convinced:

CHAIR: There's no reason for us to presume that our students are less talented than anyone else's. I think we can raise their performance levels with better instruction.

DEAN: I'm for that. But we have a fine faculty. Can they actually make their teaching more effective?

CHAIR: No doubt about it!

PRES: You sound convinced.

CHAIR: I am. And I've got a plan.

DEAN: Maybe you can give it to us on the way to the tennis courts. Our match is at two....

Let me interrupt at this point. The stage has been set, the players are on their way to the tennis club, and the chairperson's marvelous plan will be unveiled enroute.

The plan will be complex. It will include proposals for individualized instruction, writing labs, reading clubs, essay competition, workshops given by off-campus communications experts, and an assortment of other sparkling new ideas. And this chairperson is a legitimate representative who speaks for all the members of the English department. Hence, the suggestions for innovation are fully departmental in origin; they are thoughtfully conceived and thoroughly researched.

The characters are still smiling when they reach the courts. So far the plan has been well-received, and the administrators are swelling with pride as the chairperson makes it clear that all the proposals are fiscally feasible. Weekly student contact hours would even increase when the new program becomes fully operational. Then, abruptly, the bomb falls. Let's eavesdrop once more.

CHAIR: Of course the members of the department expect a reduction in course load if this program is adopted. **PRES** (eyebrows raised): Oh? Would it be necessary?

CHAIR: I'm sure it would. Our instructors would have to put in longer hours because of the time spent in writing labs and in planning sessions with me. They'd earn some kind of consideration, and a reduced load would be the logical choice.

PRES: I see.

DEAN: I've got a question—it's a little sensitive though.

CHAIR: Fire away.

DEAN: Can you guarantee us that your instructors won't take advantage of the situation if we cut their loads?

CHAIR (alert): In what way?

DEAN (smiling): Well, I'd guess that many of them would look upon this load reduction as an opportunity to make a little extra money.

CHAIR: Oh?

DEAN: Sure. Lots of them would simply pick up an extra course -- at night or even during the day -- to increase their salaries.

CHAIR: That's possible. But I can't predict how many would do it. Some instructors already teach night courses at other schools; I don't keep track of their extra classes. That's their business.

Of course the dialogue would not end there. But for our purposes it must. Two questions have been raised by the Dean, and they are sensitive. Should community college instructors be allowed to teach as many courses as they wish? And if so, why should administrations and boards of trustees be expected to grant load reductions to (English) faculty who will merely take on extra courses rather than spending their newly created free time improving their teaching?

Some of you will feel that these questions should be avoided. Others will claim that the inflationary spiral has made it mandatory for instructors to teach heavy loads. Those who feel strongly enough about this issue to respond to the Dean's questions are encouraged to do so. All responses will be printed in the spring issue of *I.E.*

Send letters to R. Hooth
c/o Crafton Hills College
11711 Sand Canyon Rd
Yucaipa, CA 92399

Placement Changes

ESSAY TESTING A SUCCESS

by Judith R. Hert

In the 1976 Spring issue of *Inside English* an article titled "Essay Testing as a Placement Device" described the attempts made by the English Division of San Bernardino Valley College to discover a fair essay test to use as a placement device. The article described a workshop led by Dr. Edward White for the English Division in which Dr. White shared the methods of essay testing and grading developed by him and his colleagues for the English Equivalency Exam given by the California State Universities and Colleges. As a result of this workshop, the English Division initiated a new program which is described in the following article.

This fall the English Division at San Bernardino Valley College abandoned their five-year-old policy of open enrollment in English composition and instituted new requirements and a new program. The new program is based on the assumption that most of the freshmen entering a community college are inadequately prepared to take transfer-level composition, and, in fact, that most of them need an English review or basic skills course. Further, given this situation, the easiest and most positive way to structure placement was to automatically assign all entering freshmen to a review, non-transfer course and as a means of placing the better students in English composition, to allow those who so chose, to challenge this course by taking an essay exam.

Thus, the new requirements are: all entering freshmen taking more than seven units or not enrolled in a special certificate program must enroll in English A Preparation for College Writing (non-transfer, three units). If they pass, they automatically receive three units of credit (applicable to the AA degree) and are immediately eligible to enroll in English 2A Composition.

Central to this new program is, of course, the English A Exam, an essay test which is developed and scored using the methods developed by Dr. Edward White and his colleagues. In the new SBVC English program this exam is used both as a challenge test to allow the adequately prepared to enroll directly in transfer composition and as a final exam in all English A classes. This division essay exam thus becomes a tool controlling enrollment in transfer composition. The individual instructor has the option of giving a D grade to those of his students who take the English A class but who fail to pass the exam. The D grade meets the AA degree requirement but it does not qualify the student to enroll in composition.

The chief advantages of this program are: the use of an essay test to judge writing, the necessity of testing only a minority of students for initial placement without singling out a group to be put back into "bonehead," and the setting of uniform standards of

performance in writing for all students taking transfer level composition.

This fall the new program began with the enrollment of all new students in English A. At the time they enrolled they were given a brochure explaining the new program and the English A Exam. The exam was given three times during the first week of classes: Wednesday, September 15, 10:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m., and Thursday, September 16, 9:30 a.m. Students paid the \$5 Credit by Examination fee at the Campus Business Office and used their receipts to gain entrance to the exam. The students were all given the same essay question and an hour in which to write. Pens, paper, and scratch paper were provided as needed. The students were told both orally and in writing that their privacy would be protected, that exam readers would not know the students' names, and that no list of failing students would be made.

Four hundred and one students took the exam. One hundred and thirty-six, approximately one-third, failed and two hundred and sixty-five, approximately two-thirds, passed the exam. This means that two-thirds of the students who chose to challenge the English A course and who paid \$5 for that opportunity—a rather select group—passed. Most of those passing who wished an English 2A class were serviced. Prime time classes, Monday-Wednesday-Friday morning classes, closed quickly, but some English 2A

classes remained open throughout the week.

The students seemed to accept both the exam and the results. Only four students chose to discuss their scores with the Division Chairperson and none of these asked that his or her score be changed. When they understood the scoring procedure and read the criteria by which the scores were assigned, they seemed satisfied. Also the degree of acceptance was undoubtedly a result of the protection given the students' privacy, the fact that failing carried no penalty, and the additional fact that the students took the test by choice.

The faculty response was also positive. In fact, the process of scoring the English A Exam produced useful dialogue in the English Division about teaching and grading essays. Already several instructors have begun on their own initiative to mutually develop essay assignments and grade sample papers from each other's classes. Although most instructors, especially English instructors, value and guard their right to teach and grade as each thinks best, the English faculty has been highly cooperative about this division exam. Most think that while the exam means more work and less freedom for the individual instructor, the gains in raising and defining standards are well worth the effort.

Rationale For New Approach

Ed. Note: The essay that follows was written in defense and support of the new English placement system initiated at San Bernardino Valley College this semester. This program (described in detail by Judith Hert in this issue of i.e.) met with some predictable criticism aimed at the English department's "instability" and "affinity for change and alteration." Most of us have encountered similar resistance to attempts at innovation.

If the public communication media are an accurate reflection of public sentiment, then, as you all must know, our society is growing increasingly discontent with the low level of literacy among our college graduates. This state of affairs is, of course, not news to college instructors in general nor to instructors in the English Division in particular. What to do about this state of affairs, then, is the question. We of the English Division lay no claim to possession of omniscience or final answers, but since

language skills lie principally in our field of activity, the heaviest share of responsibility would seem to fall to us. We say "heaviest share" advisedly because literacy is not a skill that students should acquire for the exclusive satisfaction of English instructors. Thus it is that our proposal invites the entire college staff to join with us in our efforts to improve the literacy levels of our students.

This is not the place for a complete statement of our philosophy of language pedagogy nor for an extensive review of the history of the problem, yet a few remarks are not inappropriate.

Those of you with longer memories will recall the cumbersome and threatening screening of entering students that was in force until the middle sixties. All beginning students in English, on the basis of three compositions written during the first week of each semester, were assigned to English 1A, the standard introduction course in composition, or to "Bonehead" English, where the staff

sought rigorously to exorcise the twin sins of run-on and fragmentary sentences from their compositions. This procedure was for many years not without some degree of efficacy. But as the social turmoil of the sixties grew with its demands that students like other minorities be treated like human beings, the scheme became increasingly counter-productive, and we switched to a scheme of open enrollment. This plan, although it did achieve certain social goals, was not entirely conducive to producing literate students. We do not apologize for abandoning the old procedure. We still feel that for that time it was the appropriate response. And we now feel that the proper course of action is to return—not to the old scheme as it was—but to a similar one with what we hope are some effective improvements.

One of the things that had gone wrong with the old system was that to a degree it had deteriorated into a witch hunt for common mechanical errors. We must admit, I think, to some

preoccupied zeal for "correctness" rather than a concern for communication. But having conceded this tinge of *mea culpa*, we must say also that we have not completely abandoned our regard for conventionally acceptable use of language. Most English instructors have a conservative care for language, but at the same time we are rather more than most not unmindful that language is a function of the whole of society and not a function merely of teachers of language. As societies change so must the language change, and we are prepared to march in step.

So we propose once again to institute a program of mandatory instruction for those students deficient in English skills with an essay test by which to certify the level of performance. Our purpose is to produce a responsible level of literacy—for both our sakes as well as for the students.

by Harold Harris

Sonnet in Which The Curmudgeon Holds Forth on Love the Student, Hate the Paper

Dammit, I told you that the red marks
Don't mean that I hate you. If you'll consider
That it took some thought and trouble to riddle
Your miserable paper with the stark
And crimson slashes, in my after dark
Or early morning sessions, then a glimmer
Might penetrate your adolescent fever
That a composition teacher's bite's the same's his bark.

All I can give you for patrimony or dowry
Is a way to find if you have thought
Anything worth thinking. It's the shape
My love takes, if you're willing to take
It that way, and loving, you really ought
To know, means never having to say I'm sorry.

A Big Hug for My Former Student C----

You just go right ahead and love me, dear
Young woman, because I love being loved,
But not because I've "made you human." We're
Not going to overlook the Lord God, the work of

Dad and mother, and what you've put
Into the project yourself. You and I
Have some inkling of undercurrent, what
Churn through the turmoil that underlies

Our social selves. Old voyeur that I am,
I only took a momentary look
Into your caldron, and found the same damn
Thing that in my undercellar cooks:

The same old newts' blood, bats' wings,
The powdered horn of unicorn, and thumbs
Of drowned sailors that we're all trying
To make into a feast when the company comes.

So if that's making you human, my young and timeless I've,
Let's have at it, trade our recipes,
Ready the bicarbonate, and heave
All we know into the pot or down the precipice.

I only warn you, though, if what you want
Is to love, you'll have to be prepared to hate,
You'll have to take what you find, whatever insight haunts.
There is no turning back at vision's gate.

So love, hate, shrink from no extreme
That takes us to our sisters and our brothers.
Reality is only what we dream,
And we will humanize each other.



Quatorzain for Colleagues and For Kay, Who Noticed

You can notice it in any college
Or university, the noisiest
Building's always the one that houses
The English Department. The suggestive edge
Of studio or lab will often hedge
The student into quiet private choices,
But whether in the classroom or the office
Building, the English student has to talk to judge.

As the fellow said once, "How do I know
What I think until I've had the chance to say it!"
This is the place to try on old ideas
Or turn them in for new, to meet the fierce
Analysis of fellow-students or of pundits.
There are quieter and worse places to go.

Conjunction for Molly Who Already Knows

And is for the disjointed experiences
That push up through dreams and trances,
That are connected somehow--who knows how!--
Perhaps the row of pins the magnet draws.

But is the deliberate voice of reason
That weighs between alternatives, agrees on
What is possible and likely,
Examines the unconscious from a height.

Or is the little act of synthesis
That lets us choose this fantasy or this
Reality, degrees of each in allegiance
Proportioned for the necessary vision.

Teacher as Poet



Evelyn Meeks

Today, you have died.
Oh, you may breakfast again
or brush your hair once more,
but really you are dead.

We, in these four heavy boxes,
horde your days and nights.
All your relics
are now our treasures.
You are moving for the last time.

Four boxes tied tightly,
packed carelessly stand before us.
Inside, wonders: a rocking-
horse blotter with faded prints;
an ancient first aid kit,
the amonia scentless and impotent;
stuffed memo pads from 1925;
and pictures of all sorts.

In one box was your retired
bathroom closet and somewhere
a broken perfume bottle.
How it stank-up the room.
An old woman's smell filled us.

We separated the piles
of plunder to divide later.
We wanted everything.

That night, as I
remembered your faint smile
when you looked a last good-bye
[you were crying too hard to speak],
I missed you,
and on my hands,
warm in the night,
your perfume played alive.

Lost in Lancaster

In Lancaster everything dies.
Although clearest blue, the skies
Themselves strain with an emptiness
That bears no shadow of fullness.

I thought cactus, with its rich green,
Its dreadful lack of thirst, could glean
Life from any terrain. With parched
Needles it points to sand, trunk arched.

Someone told me that underground,
In deep burrows, rats with huge, round
Eyes thrive in cool, dark air,
Which at night are seen everywhere.

If it's true that in the desert
Things are reversed, with the inert
Above, life below, then no wonder
Maps prove deadly as false thunder.

by Frank Zajackowski

by
Frank
Zajackowski



The Refrigerator

So, the summer is over.
Now the tinfoil comes down,
the window frames autumn,
and the mocking bird
mocks himself.

In a dung encrusted nest,
the fertility of spring stales,
and you ask for a match.

We build a fire of green
wood that cracks
like cold knuckles
in the half warm room.

We chatter and banter
each other with argument,
but there is no danger
of misunderstanding,
for there is nothing
to understand.

The day seeps dark;
we move to the kitchen.
The refrigerator is a cold place
to search for food,
yet we are hungry
and have no choice

Literacy

(cont. from page 1)

College English programs today should offer diagnostic testing in both reading and writing, and open-entry, open-exit "labs" as a means of dealing with language skills deficiencies. Students should be given the choice of taking the laboratory classes or not. The only exception should be that students tested at the lowest skills levels should be required to take remediation, the chances of their survival in college otherwise being almost nil.

College freshman English teachers must come up with other alternatives to the basic 1a, 1b format that will motivate students to improve their writing skills. Instruction in writing per se should be a part of the basic course, but students should be given the freedom to write in a way that expresses their native skills: love of humor and irony, honesty, and a style which incorporates the refreshing idiom of actual speech.

Write for i.e.

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This journal is your forum, your sounding board. Thus far the articles and features have not fully reflected the readership's wide diversity and broad base. Perhaps like Jimmy Carter, *inside english* had an identity problem to overcome.

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attack pending legislation, review a promising new text, or react to an article in this issue of *inside english*. We are, after all, communications experts, and we should certainly be in constant communication with each other. The journal's purpose is to keep the lines open.

Send articles, poems, and essays to Richard Booth, c/o Crafton Hills College, 11711 San Canyon Road, Yucaipa, California 92399.



The Journal of the English Council
of the California Two-Year Colleges

SPECIAL STATEWIDE CONFERENCE ISSUE

JEAN TRAPNELL ADDRESS

Board Of Governors Is Listening . . .

Mrs. Jean Trapnell, Board of Governors, California Community Colleges

I was being driven to the Sacramento Airport the other day, through the lush farmland in that part of the state, thinking how little I knew about farming. I can identify artichokes, lettuce, tomatoes—maybe a few other plants—but I was especially aware of my deficiencies that day because I was returning from a State Vocational Education Committee meeting—I am a member of that committee—and had had fresh realization of my ignorance of the technicalities of vocational education, not just of farming.

As we drove down the road, we passed two men dressed in jeans and blue shirts, looking like farm workers, both young, one a dwarf walking in back of the other, both strapping and husky looking. I said to the vocational instructor who was driving me, "They remind me of Lennie and George," and immediately there flooded through my mind that wonderful, human, compassionate quality of Steinbeck's great book *Of Mice and Men*. The whole trip through the flatlands of central California was transformed for me, but I suddenly realized that my companion was asking me, "Who are they?"

I think I interested him, and I shouldn't have been condescending. He knew those farmlands. I still think my life is richer, however, for knowing Steinbeck.

Ideally, we should both know both. The physical and the psychological are inseparable (as our students often indicate in their spelling of the two words), and we should all know both skills and books. However, more and more of the community college students are learning skills—and fewer and fewer are reading books, at least in English classes. More than 67 percent of the community college classes now conducted in California are vocational. On the 6th and 7th of October I went to Costa Mesa to the meeting of the Deans of Vocational Education. The place was overflowing with bright, enthusiastic, creative people, getting all kinds of federal money and state grants to develop new courses, from foster home care and consumer education to the repair of foreign cars. I was frankly envious of their strength, and glad that I was going to have the privilege of talking to you about the possibility of forming a companion or

parallel State Committee of English and the Humanities.

At the next Board of Governors meeting, I tried out the idea on some of my colleagues, informally of course, and received enthusiastic response—it sounded good to them.

That's the good news, as they like to say today; now for the bad news. My topic really should be reversed to read, "English and Humanities Leadership and the State Board." Although the State Board of Governors is charged in the Education Code with leadership and with the maintenance of academic standards, the division between local and state control is tenuous, difficult, and guarded. I, as a member of the Board of Governors, can only encourage you, who represent the local districts, to come to us with proposals so substantial, representative, and generally acceptable that we will be overwhelmed, and will take the ball from there. I know that many, if not most, members of the Board of Governors are very concerned and will listen with interest, possibly even be willing to try to fund your proposals.

You have one great advantage with regard to timing: in addition to the statewide talk about the inability of students to read and write and about the number of functional illiterates among the adult population, there is, as you know, the likelihood that community college transfers will have to take an English proficiency exam at whatever four-year college or university they attend. In addition, there is talk of the advisability of requiring an English proficiency exam for the AA or AS degree. You, the English Council, are prepared, I am sure, to take the lead in advising the Board and the Chancellor's office whether the latter is wise or necessary and how to prepare our students for the former—the four-year college exam.

Although I imagine you are in touch with Dr. Mangham's office about this particular situation, I suggest that you use it as a foot in the door to advise the Board of Governors on the wider situation of English requirements, remediation, and general language proficiency of our students, not only to meet the college and university exams, but to meet the requirements of

vocational and general education. This is an area in which there has been a great deal of change in the last few years. I am sure you are aware of the problems raised in Dr. Knoell's report to the Postsecondary Education Commission, *Through the Open Door*. They concern grading, probation, persistence, college courses, etc., and are of importance in the teaching of English. The CCJCA is spending this entire year studying and reacting to this publication. I should think *Through the Open Door* and the delineation of functions in the RAVE

BANQUET REMARKS

. . . And Waiting

Elizabeth Manning Deedy, President,
Board of Governors,
California Community Colleges

It is a special pleasure to bring you the greetings of Dr. Sidney Brossman, Chancellor of California Community Colleges, and the greetings of the Board of Governors. While Dr. Brossman regrets that a conflict in his schedule of appointments made it impossible for him to accept your invitation, I am grateful that the conflict made it possible for me as President of the Board of Governors to join you.

It is increasingly important for the community colleges of this state that we develop and maintain an effective dialogue between the Statewide Board and the local districts, though organizations such as yours, operating from "grass roots" in a most important discipline. You represent the vitality and dedication of local districts. You discuss issues of concern to students, to the local districts.

The Board of Governors benefits from hearing your concerns, your recommendations. We welcome your suggestions forwarded through the Statewide Staff in the Chancellor's office prior to the time of action by the Board.

Too frequently the lines of communication break or become foggy and appear to be misquoted. Letters, notices, questionnaires are mailed. Responses arrive and are tabulated.

councils would provide a basis for your addressing the Board as to the necessity of a Statewide English Council.

The need for a State Committee on (or of) the Humanities, with the English Council leading in its development, is further indicated in Dr. Knoell's comment in her report that "Change in the nature of the faculty and staff has been considerably less than that found in the student body during the past several years, in terms of the latter's objectives, life experiences, motivation, and other characteristics." (cont. on page 3)

Advisory and technical committees are organized and meet. And then the staff develops agenda items for the Board of Governor's considerations and action. Too frequently—in my estimation—after the action has been taken we hear that the Board's action did not in truth "really address the issue" and that the Board's action now requires corrective, clarifying regulations or even legislation.

We need timely, effective communication. As I reviewed your program for this conference, I was interested to note that you are talking about and considering topics of concern to the Board of Governors—topics to be on our agenda in months ahead—grading practices, graduation requirements, proficiency tests, basic skills, the humanities, changing programs to meet changing times.

Let the Statewide Board benefit from your discussions. Let us hear the studies you think are needed. Let us know the recommendations you develop. Let us receive the conclusions you reach.

With your help and the help of other community college organizations, with better coordination of local and state concerns, the work of the Board of Governors will surely be more effective for the state and for the local districts.

Sacramento Scene

by Shirley Middleton
Cosumnes River College



Through the Open Door, the California Postsecondary Education Commission's final report on the patterns and performance of community college students, shatters many of our long-held stereotypes and gives us pause as we consider its implications. Less than 10 percent of community college students, full and part time, complete associate degrees and certificates, while only about 41,000 of the more than one million enrolled move on to pursue baccalaureate degrees. Consequently, the Commission study focuses on the remaining number, those "non-traditional" students who now constitute the majority of the community college population.

Initiated by legislative request in 1972, the study encompasses the data on some 35,000 first-time students in 32 California community colleges. Part-time students comprise two-thirds of the head count enrollment. More than one-third of the enrollment consists of individuals over 35 years of age, and part-timers 21 and above account for nearly half the students in credit classes. Obviously, continuing education for part-time adult students has become a major function of the community colleges.

Recommendations intended to meet the diverse needs of this non-traditional student call for flexibility in calendar, course scheduling, and instruction. Although current provisions of the Education Code restrict the possibility of change in calendar and measurement of student workload, alternate modes are under study. Through special legislation Cabrillo College has operated under a

4-1-4 calendar for the past four years. Now a two-year Flexible Calendar Pilot Program, authorized by AB2232, has begun (Fall '76) in six districts. Should the program prove successful, its extension to all community colleges in 1978-79 or 1979-80 will be proposed to the legislature.

In line with the findings and recommendations of the CPEC report, a preliminary version (October, 1976) of the 1977-82 Community College Five-Year Plan advances competency-based learning as an alternative to fixed terms of instruction. Such an approach, likely modular, would allow for open entry-open exit courses of variable length and unit credit, depending upon individual mastery of subject material. In addition, the Plan supports improvement of diagnostic procedures in remedial programs along with greater emphasis on individualized learning generally, through the expanded use of tutors, paraprofessionals, and such instructional technology as television, films, audio-tapes, slides, and computers.

The significant increase in the number of part-time students whose objectives, performance, and persistence lie outside traditional patterns points to the shaping of new subject areas and the acquisition of skills related to new learning systems. For these aims to be achieved, incentives for experimentation and staff development or retraining are recommended.

And if this preview of our future becomes a reality, even that rare bird, the traditional student, may benefit from the greater flexibility of the California community colleges.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

by Elliot Roberts
Monterey Peninsula College

The designation of chairpersons as faculty, supervisory, or management was the primary concern of the discussion group on "Collective Bargaining and Its Implications for the Chairperson." Approximately 20 chairpersons participated, representing community colleges from all ten ECCTYC regions.

The major expressed concern was an ominous state-wide trend taking place in the absence of collective bargaining. Most districts have tried to designate, have already designated, or plan to designate chairpersons as management, even though these districts have not yet entered into collective bargaining. Some have done this in surprise moves, generally over the objections of the faculty and the chairpersons, themselves. The danger in such advance designation, it was agreed, was that this could become a self-fulfilling prophecy, for when collective bargaining does come to these districts, the chairperson will, in fact, be management. Since these districts are not yet under collective bargaining, such changes are permissible, and many felt that administrations were using the advent of collective bargaining as an excuse to make changes which will place chairpersons in the management category. Some districts, for example, have already replaced faculty-oriented chairpersons with administration-oriented ones, and turned them into full-time administrators. At other community colleges, administrators talk of replacing chairpersons with deans.

The group discussed one way to confront such unilateral changes: for the chairpersons at each school to organize their own supervisory unit. This would have several benefits. It

would prevent the administration from achieving a fait accompli in the designation of chairpersons as management; it would separate the chairpersons from administration and thus allow them and the faculty to "identify a common enemy"; it would allow the chairpersons to represent their own distinct viewpoint.

The group also discussed the possible advantages and disadvantages of the classification of chairpersons as management. On the one hand, Michael Seeley, Ventura College, suggested that the addition of chairpersons to management would swell the ranks of management with faculty-oriented and faculty-allied people, thus having a profound effect upon decision making in management councils. On the other hand, Joseph Adams, Butte College, foresaw the eventual elimination of the faculty-oriented chairperson, who would either become a management person who forgot he once was a teacher, or, if he kept his teacher orientation, would be replaced by the administration. According to Jack Gill, College of San Mateo, the latter has already happened in his district.

John Luden, Sacramento City College, reported on the EERB hearings held in the Los Rios District. At those hearings, the administration argued for the chairpersons as management; the chairpersons expressed a preference for supervisory designation; and CTA, AFT and the faculty argued for the faculty designation.

Discussion group members agreed that the Los Rios decision would not be precedent-setting, but that EERB will handle each district separately. Thus, the designations of chairpersons as faculty, supervisory or management may vary from district to district.

Grading Standards And Graduation Requirements

by Gertrude S. Fujii

Los Angeles Valley College

Attesting to the concern which responsible instructors feel regarding the pervasive trend toward inflated grades, some 35 English department chairmen met to discuss the problem during the first English Department Chairmen's Conference sponsored by the English Council of Two Year Colleges at San Francisco, November 12-13.

In order to understand this grade shift which seems to be universal at all levels of education, the group observed some of the reasons responsible for this trend: the student uprising of the mid 1960's; the ensuing proliferation of "standard" courses to accommodate the "relevant" ones demanded by students; emphasis upon the process rather than the product; the desire for instant results and instant education; increased minority enrollment with possible lowering of standards; continuation of the "A and B" syndrome from lower levels; and erosion of academic standards in all disciplines.

A particularly effective argument

was given by one of the minority instructors present for the preservation of standards and the demand for excellence from minority students. Many instructors, he noted, often from mistaken kindness allow a minority student to pass with unrealistically high grades, but these instructors are actually performing a disservice because the student still has not mastered the skills necessary for him to survive subsequent college work.

Problems related to grade inflation were also discussed and included: unrealistic assessment of student achievement throughout the educational system; fear that instructors might lose students and thus have their classes cancelled and positions curtailed; unprepared students not equipped with necessary skills for later college, vocational, or professional work; and meaningless grades which colleges and employers cannot use to measure an applicant's real ability or preparation.

Various possibilities for improving the situation were then studied by the

group and the following were seriously considered as guidelines: establishment of a personal grading criterion for each instructor in keeping with student ability; establishment of a department-wide grading norm for differing levels of college work; establishment of a non-grade, e.g., Incomplete, Credit-Non Credit, or credit to be granted only when work is accomplished; reduction of time that a student is allowed before he can drop a class without penalty; restoration of the D or F grade in institutions where they were dropped; removal of possible penalty for instructors with low weekly student contact hours; recording of average grade of class and number in class on student transcripts; an educational campaign to enlist other disciplines to encourage more writing, especially in the Humanities; articulation with high schools regarding grading standards; publishing of grades from other departments; and letters upholding academic standards to be written to the deans of instruction.

In line with grade inflation and the

fact that students were leaving colleges poorly prepared in writing and reading skills, the group then turned its attention to possible changes in graduation requirements for the Associates in Arts degree. Steps considered were the development of a state-wide commission on grading and academic standards to work with the State Board of Governors; the naming of a specific number of units in English and elimination of substitute courses for English; articulation with state colleges and universities in line with their requirements for student transfers to their institutions; and the possible establishment of a minimum proficiency examination in English before an AA degree is granted.

Write
for **i.e.**

Send articles, poems, and essays to:
Richard Booth, c/o Crafton Hills College, 11711 Sand Canyon Road, Yucaipa, California 92399.

Garrison Seminar In July

by Lowell Dabbs
Bakerfield College

By now, if you have been reading *Inside English* (1), you have heard of Roger Garrison (2). He has the strange notion that teaching writing is somewhat akin to teaching painting or composing or loving—that it occurs best between two interested people, one of whom wants the other to try something new (3). I went to his two-week seminar in Portland, Maine, two years ago, partly to learn, partly to savor the Maine summer (4). And I am convinced that this oldest (5) of the new gospels has lasting merit.

The Dean of Instruction at Bakerfield College is also convinced, so much so that he is organizing a seven-day seminar in the teaching of composition to be held this summer, July 9-16, 1977 at Pajaro Dunes Conference Center, just north of Monterey Bay on the Pacific Coast. I would like to stress the importance of working with this concept over a period of seven days rather than one or two (two weeks would be even better). One of the several good things I got from the Maine conference was support from the seventy or more other people in the group, the kind of lift that can build only over a period of time. Another is immersing oneself in the role of writer-student. Again, this takes time. Still another (6) is the chance to hear two other first-rate practitioners—Tom Carnicelli and Lester Fisher—talk about their own alternative approaches.

The Post Office address for Pajaro Dunes says Watsonville, which means that you would be on the beach, somewhere between Carmel and San Francisco (7). The price will be within reason, and will be adjusted to the kind of accommodation you require. College credit is available. And—as Mr. Garrison suggests—you may never mark another essay (8).

For more information, write or call:

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Dean of Instruction
Bakerfield College
1801 Panorama Drive
Bakerfield, CA 93305
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Notes

- (1) And very likely even if you haven't.
- (2) My answer to the behaviorists, accountants, the WSCHists.
- (3) Or something very, very odd.
- (4) Maybe even partly to scoff. Had I not learned over the past twenty years that teaching liberal education, semantics, linguistics, structural grammar, communication theory, et al had failed to teach people how to write?
- (5) And were you not a tutor, O Socrates?
- (6) There are more, but you get the idea.
- (7) If you can't think of what to do after hours in such a setting, do not pass Go.
- (8) If this be treason, etc.

Oxford - Garrison Method

IT WORKS!

During a typical school week Oxford tutors sit in their cells talking over compositions with individual students. In California two-year colleges, groups of 20-40 students meet 3-5 hours each week with a single instructor. The California two-year colleges are centuries, a continent, and an ocean apart from Oxford. Oxford is as nearly elite as a college can be in a 20th century democracy, and our community colleges are more totally inclusive than any the world has known. Can California two-year colleges adopt and adapt the Oxford tutorial method to their time and circumstance?

Apparently the answer is yes. Difficult to believe? It was for me. But listen to what the community college practitioners of the modified Oxford method say:

"Intensely interpersonal..."

"It's great...It's fun...It's Fun!!!"

"You know when you read a paper, don't you, that you want to talk to the person."

"There is more joy in this system than you realize."

"It is sort of hard to have a congratulatory comment written on a paper that really has the effect you want. And when students see that you are really excited...all of a sudden they see, that 'gee,' the writing really does make a difference."

"I found out what can happen in an interview when a student comes from the inside out."

Once you try it, you never want to take that stack of papers home again."

Credit for this enthusiasm must be in part granted to Roger H. Garrison and his touchstone—the brief (3-5 minute) teacher-student interview. Garrison has been featured in workshops throughout the state recently. The effect has been dramatic. While no one seems to adopt the Garrison method without modification, few who attend his workshops return unchanged to their composition classes. They re-evaluate and redistribute the time they have to spend with students.

The Oxford-Garrison-Tutorial Method even appears to have reached the ranks of ex-teachers. Ms. Trapnell, a retired two-year college English instructor, currently a member of the Board of Governors for the California Community College system, keynoted ECCTYC's final conference session. She reminisced about her years in the classroom. Naturally, she had her regrets. The most intense concerned all of the time she had spent over the years writing remarks and corrections on student themes. She said that nothing could have been more useless. Perhaps Ms. Trapnell senses what many California two-year English instructors have recently come to realize, and what Oxford tutors must have known for centuries, that written comments on themes may be the ultimate failure of the written word.

WRITING - READING LABS

by Donna Willoughby

Golden West College

Approximately forty-five individuals attended the workshop entitled "Writing-Reading Labs" the morning of November 13.

Discussion began with members of the group briefly identifying the kinds of services they provide to students. Most stated that they have reading labs, and approximately one third have writing and reading labs of some kind. Systems discussed ranged from full-service, media supported skills centers providing one-to-one conferencing from a team of English teachers on a ratio of one teacher to seventy students, to remedial experts supported by aides and working with small groups of students on a ratio of one to fifteen.

Advantages of writing-reading labs over a remedial classroom were identified as follows: (1) One to one conferencing is possible. (2) Labs stand in for the rote drill and repetition that sometimes occur in a classroom. (3) A student can work at his own pace. (4) The lab is a place where students can be referred from other departments on a campus. (5) Frightened students who fear public embarrassment find the privacy of a lab comforting. One disadvantage identified was that one teacher can better get to know the small group of students if he works with them in a self-contained classroom.

The discussion group then weighed the comparative merits of having one to three expert staff members as opposed to all or most of the English staff being involved in the remedial program. The former seems easier to coordinate, whereas the latter leads to a sense of commitment to the remedial program from all staff, common objectives, teamwork, etc.

Those members of the group who had secured administrative support

with budgets, staff, facilities, etc. advised others to start small, prove effectiveness, and then add on to their programs. Further, on-site visitation of other campuses which have good programs was suggested as a means of securing support on the home campus, the thinking being that many administrators don't like to be outdone by another campus. Finally, it was apparent that there is no "magic model," but that someone else's plan might be modified to fit the particular circumstances of a campus, its staff and students.

In-Service Programs

by John Coates Orange Coast College

The discussion group on in-service program was held on Saturday morning from 9:00 to 10:00. Approximately ten people attended. The discussion was very informal, centering in the main around two topics: 1) The kind of in-service programs provided for in the colleges represented, and 2) Specific programs that have proved especially successful.

Of the English departments represented, most at present do not have an organized on-going program in in-service, although all chairpersons present indicated a desire to establish a worth-while in-service program, most reported that both funding and faculty receptivity to such programs are problems.

Some time was given to discussing programs that have been successful. Of those mentioned, the most successful seem to be programs that involve either exchange of information regarding in-class activities and techniques, or retraining in particular skill areas, such as developmental reading.

Trapnell Address

(cont. from page 1)

teristics..." She further recommends that "Community Colleges should be encouraged to strengthen their efforts in in-service staff development programs, to enable them to cope more effectively with changing student characteristics and objectives."

I made the comment at the last Board of Governors' meeting that the recommendations in this report [Through the Open Door] are rather contradictory. On the one hand we are told that community college courses must have uniform standards and grades and that community college students should be encouraged to contract for series of courses for the sake of persistence in learning and accomplishment, and, on the other hand, we are told to meet students' needs. Even more, unlimited allowance of "incompletes" is suggested. I asked at the meeting how instructors and administrators were going to meet these seemingly opposite demands, and I am suggesting that you, as a statewide body, lead the way in solving it for English and the

Humanities

This would give you the dual responsibility of language proficiency and of course changes in the whole field of English and the Humanities.

As I see it, there are two ways in which implementation and development can take place: interdisciplinary and interethnic. English is particularly suited to lead the way in an interdisciplinary direction, because it is already there. I have mentioned the pressing problem of English proficiency—this is not an English problem. We have talked over the years about reading and writing being the responsibility of all departments. I attended a meeting, as I said, of the Deans of Vocational Education recently where a presentation was made of a Consumer Education unit to be used in all Occupational Courses in the community colleges. The entire kit, including three 15 minute slides, was available to all occupational instructors.

Why could not the English Council of the State Committee of (cont. on page 4)

Trapnell Address

(cont. from page 3)

the Humanities sponsor kits for reading, writing, possibly also for English as a Second Language, for spelling, for vocabulary, etc., to be given to all instructors in the Humanities and in the occupational field also? Although there are VEA federal funds available for the Consumer project in Vocational education, and none so directly available in English, except possibly NDEA, there are grants and funds not being used from the Federal Endowment for the Humanities, from the State Council for the Arts, from other federal, state, and foundation sources—even from your own college districts or possibly from the Board of Governors. The Center for the Study of Community Colleges, in a study conducted recently for the National Endowment for the Humanities among more than 2,000 community college Humanities instructors across the country, revealed that only 8 percent of them had ever had grants of any kind. According to the study, there are many available, most between \$10,000 and \$20,000 for the year. At any rate, the English Council of the State Committee of the Humanities could take the lead in publicizing the funds available and in encouraging instructors to apply for them. The Board of Governors' budget includes a Washington office for the California community colleges, which would facilitate federal funds.

It is possible that, further than just the integration of the techniques of English with the other courses, as I have suggested for the kits in writing and reading, there should be integration of content, such as is often seen in television and movies these days. *How Green Was My Valley*, playing now on Channel 28, Public Television, in Los Angeles, and *Network*, a new movie by Paddy Chayevsky, are examples of social and psychological literature fairly common on the screen today. They combine high literary quality with social and psychological illumination. Students are accustomed to this combination, good or bad, in their movie and television experiences. Possibly a core course like *Modern America* or *American Culture* should be the 12 unit course designed for entering community college freshmen

and should consist of English 1 with other Humanities and Social Science courses. This would answer some of the criticisms of fragmented and part-time learning (with an equally fragmented and part-time attendance at college) mentioned in *Through the Open Door*. Certainly it is an area in which grants could be obtained, research done, and leadership shown by the English Council of the Committee on Humanities. Perhaps I am presumptuous in making these suggestions. I don't mean to be. I am simply suggesting that these are ideas that the Board of Governors would, I think, like and encourage.

You will have noticed that I have put English at the core of the Humanities and in a leadership role. To fit such a role and to insure more courses for English instructors, however, I suggest that English courses themselves must

become more humanistic. I would like to quote James Farrell, author of *Studs Lonigan*, who was exploiting his latest and 57th book on the *Today* show recently. As you know, he is particularly noted for his studies of the Irish working class in Chicago, and a question as to why his latest book wasn't on the same subject elicited the comment that he didn't believe in confining one's self to ethnic studies or literature, adding, "If you get all your values from one culture or one race, the results can be regressive. Literature is now world literature." My contention is that our English Literature, and even American Literature courses are ethnic courses—fascinating to me in large part because I come from the British culture that produced them—but no longer viable as the primary fields in literature for the multiracial, multicultural, and multiethnic students that attend our community colleges.

I know that they have been the educational procrustean bed that Italians, Jews, Irish, Swedes, Poles, and many others have fitted themselves into for at least 100 years, but times have changed. Students are no longer taking literature classes. The Center for the Study of Community Colleges in the study of the Humanities that I have already mentioned found that the 2,000 instructors they questioned ranked as most important qualities for their students to gain, first, self-knowledge and personal identity, and, second, knowledge of and interest in world problems. It has even been said by psychologists that, in these days of mobility and divorce, students find self-identification more commonly in their ethnic backgrounds than in their friends and family.

These objectives would seem to indicate a need for English to become what used to be called Comparative or World Literature or what Farrell called *Literature*. No longer can we expect black, Asian, Mexican, Italian, or white Californian students of backgrounds other than British to identify with even such a modern book as *Lord of the Flies*, to say nothing of *Oliver Twist* or *Tom Sawyer*. And, for that matter, isn't it regressive for those of us who are of British stock to be confined to our own kind? Especially the 70 percent of the students who don't transfer, but also those that do, may find their self-identity, values, and knowledge of world problems better in Silone, Kazantzakis, Moravia, Brian Moore and O'Casey, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Tolstoy and Solzhenitsyn, Cocteau, Hesse, Gunter Grass, Doris Lessing, Garcia Lorca, Ruben Dario, and a host of others, most of whom we do not include in our Lit classes. I know some of this is being done, but a State Committee on the Humanities, headed by the English Council, could validate new literature courses and could gain acceptance for them with the Chancellor's Office and the four-year institutions. Certainly reviewing and re-working literature classes in the humanistic mould would go a long way to meet the recommendations in *Through the Open Door* and, on that basis alone, would, I think, get funds from local and

statewide governmental groups. A better first semester or first year introduction to English than our present English 1A might also persuade students to try our second semester and second year courses. The development of courses with a broader appeal would be in line for grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, whose funding the new President of the United States, a voracious reader himself, says he will increase. Even at present funds can be obtained. The papers recently reported that Oakland received \$55,000 from the National Endowment to record the voices of people on the streets. If ethnic voices can be recorded, why not get money to read ethnic books?

Evaluation is important, and it is a word that appeals to all governing bodies. The Statewide Humanities Committee could ask the Board of Governors that a cadre of English instructors and department heads be made an Advisory Committee. Unlike the present state Advisory Committees that advise only the Chancellor's Office, this committee would advise the colleges, evaluate their courses, conduct seminars and in-service training and give other services to English instructors. Models would have to be set up first, similar to COPEs, which does the same job as above for occupational programs and instructors, and SAM, the Student Accountability Model, which occupational instructors have devised for themselves. You will notice that, again, I suggest starting with English, since your English Council is already organized and since most colleges, trustees, and governing boards think that English is the critical area. Later, possibly, the Advisory Committee could be expanded to the Humanities.

In the field of occupational education, the cadre of faculty and administrators making up COPEs (don't ask me what that acronym means) is requested by administrators of an individual college or district to come in and do the evaluation and in-service training I have outlined above. The college making the request pays the expenses. COPEs visited nine colleges last year. More than one president has told me that if the English Council provided a similar service in that field, invitations would pour in. You would have to agree, after research and creative thinking, on the goals and objectives, standards, courses, preferred teaching techniques, etc., or language proficiency and literature courses before you would present the counterpart of COPEs to the Chancellor's Office and the Board of Governors. The maintenance of academic standards is called for in both the Education Code and *Through the Open Door*, however, and you would be welcome in Sacramento.

It has just occurred to me that, again, this English or Humanities version of COPEs is timely, in view of the "permissive accreditation" that is being discussed as an alternative to accreditation by the Western Colleges Association, which some people are unhappy with. Permissive accreditation, as I understand it, would allow the college to assess itself, or,

possibly, to bring in whatever agencies it feels could be of help in its self-assessment. In addition, both the Board of Governors and the Postsecondary Education Commission are now charged with drawing up Five Year Plans for postsecondary education, with annual revision. I notice that much space and attention are given in these documents to Occupational Education, but very little to improvement and change in Humanities instruction, mainly because little is known about it. However, the grandiose plans for a "Golden State University," a suggested fourth segment of postsecondary education which threatens to cut considerably into what has been the charge given to the community colleges, could be countered by realistic and sound proposals for renovating English and the Humanities. The main thrust here is televised courses, with "facilitators" or instructors similar to England's *Open University*. This is a very important area that you should be studying, because, not only will Golden State University use it but several community college districts have already funded it locally. There is money for research and development in English and the Humanities—courses that are easily taken from the classroom and put on the air, but that you may still control and monitor. The funds you receive for this can be used for all courses, campus or tube. I suggest that you read the volume, produced by the Postsecondary Commission, *Postsecondary Alternatives* and that you also get copies of the *Postsecondary Education Commission's* and *Community Colleges' Five Year Plans*. These can certainly be made the basis of presentations to the Board of Governors, which would welcome help in adding plans for language remediation, for forming and changing objectives and courses, and particularly for planning and broadening community college education.

I think I have been realistic in showing you what areas concern the Board of Governors, what questions and problems they have been considering recently, and where you could come in with proposals that both your Council and the Board of Governors would be happy with. It is not unusual for such proposals to be made directly to the Board, and for the Board to take action. At one of my first meetings, there was a motion to support a bill that would have allowed occupational instead of general education courses for graduation. I am pleased to say that some instructors from San Francisco City College opposed the motion, and I added my opposition, so that we were able to persuade the Board to defeat the motion, which had been slated to pass. At the last meeting of the Board, the same instructors from San Francisco City appeared before us to answer questions on a very well-prepared Proposed Amendment to Title 5, requiring an American History-American Political Institutions course for graduation from a community college. Action will be taken on this at the next meeting. I urge you also to take the leadership in urging leadership from the Board of Governors.

Research Project Tackled

ECCTYC PROPOSES MAJOR STUDY

Ed. Note: The following remarks were excerpted from a presentation made to the Board of Governors, California Community Colleges by Don Snapp, President of ECCTYC. The remarks were made at the Sacramento Inn on January 14, 1977.

I appear before you especially as a result of the conference which our English Council gave in San Francisco in mid-November for all two-year chairpersons of English and the humanities. Eighty-one two-year colleges were represented, much input and exchange was achieved in the workshops, and our conference was graced by then President of the Board Betty Deedy's opening banquet remarks and by the excellent luncheon address the following day delivered by Jean Trapnell. Both urged our organization to offer suggestions and guidance to the Board of Governors in matters involving the discipline of English. Actually, our English Council does feel especially responsible because it more particularly represents this field in the two-year college than any other in the state, and our experience is based not only on continuous research, but even more important, we directly represent the chairpersons and instructors in these disciplines. Four areas of major concern exist, and we have specific suggestions for confronting them and perhaps discovering more.

First, we are concerned with the heavy commitment that the Five-Year Plan will apparently make to "individualized instruction." While the tutorial, one-to-one relationship between instructor and student is most desirable, the cost of such a program will be phenomenal, and such a program, if human talent were insufficient, could well send more colleges on the search for more hardware-computers, reading machines, cassettes, etc. -- possibly dehumanizing even more the discipline which should have the most to do with humaneness--the humanities. We respectfully

suggest that more information and further study is absolutely necessary in the field of individual instruction and remediation.

Here we need particularly to consider the recent study by the American Institutes for Research involving three years of investigation at a cost of \$1.8 million for the United States Office of Education. This study deals directly with innovation and individualization over the past years and concludes that little substantial improvement in standardized reading and math scores has resulted. Attached to this presentation is an article from *The Washington Post* about this study.

In this connection, we need to discover, publicize, and offer as a model those programs that are presently working effectively in educating the disadvantaged, especially minorities and those for whom English is a second language. We need most sorely to find how various programs vary and finally to discover where duplication is occurring. Over the past 20 years a considerable number of "innovative" approaches have been funded and attempted. Have they been evaluated, and, if so, what were the findings? If they are fairly recent in origin and have never been evaluated, they should be evaluated now. Surely our California Community College system has achieved over many years enough maturity to employ an ever-varying and broadening experience to justify such an investigation. Such a study would reveal which programs have been most successful in raising student reading and writing capabilities and such a study would certainly indicate what types of colleges had best profited from what types of programs, thus ensuring a series of choices and alternatives, with a continuing autonomy for each college.

Second, we are particularly desirous that the study just mentioned would include more than curricular study and development.

Literacy accountability must become our deeper concern, since the University of California and the California State University and Colleges are adding entrance and proficiency tests in English to their standard procedures. Moreover, employers are demanding higher literacy standards of the community college students who become their employees. Finally, we certainly must not skirt the issue of establishing acceptable literacy standards for all students completing course work at community colleges. This accountability and "responsible evaluation," and "new methods of evaluating student performance" are specifically noted in the Five-Year Plan (page 20-21).

Third, we particularly endorse the concern expressed in the Five-Year Plan with "student persistence." Dr. Knoell, in *Through The Open Door*, states that the student who completes one year in a community college usually will continue with his or her education, but each of us knows the fearful mortality we experience in students who drop out in less than a year or even a semester. We pride ourselves upon offering college education to "those who can benefit" any place in California. Too often, as has been stated many times before, our open doors become revolving doors and students sprint in and crawl out. We feel that many of the students whom we lose so quickly would profit immeasurably by better orientation and stricter curricular guidance. If a student can neither read nor write well, he nor she can hardly cope with a varied college program but would most benefit from a core program from one of several possible core programs with English and humanities at the center, where the four or five classes taken during the first semester could be specifically and accurately directed toward improving the student's reading and writing skills and in exploring and decreasing the poverty of knowledge in the humanities that so many of our

students unfortunately display. Such "core programs" must be sufficiently varied yet specialized enough to serve as a wealth of guidelines and suggestions to colleges that differ widely in need, yet share the right to determine the nature of such programs. We could then point with increased pride not only to the hundreds of thousands of students who come to us but also a larger number who could successfully persist. The study I have mentioned should certainly address itself to this program.

Fourth, our constantly changing student body with their varying directions and demands have made imperative a greater flexibility and more varied abilities in our faculty. This need is particularly apparent in the discipline of English where the cessation of a military action in East Asia can result in a sudden change in the number and capability of entering students. If we are effectively to meet the sudden, unexpected, but constant challenges we have been experiencing over the past three decades, it is absolutely necessary that we study various possibilities for added staff development, which would certainly include in-service training. New and changing techniques in the teaching of composition (a reemphasis upon the teaching of standard English) and reading (psycho-linguistics) are examples of mandates that we constantly reevaluate and update our teaching methods. To summarize, we feel that the study we suggest concern itself primarily in the fields of: (1) remediation, (2) literacy, proficiency, and accountability, (3) student persistence and success, and (4) staff development, particularly in-service training.

We deeply feel that the study we envision would be of great value, and we are convinced that such a study could be conducted effectively and economically, with a minimum of red tape and bureaucratic hurdles.

The Second R in Crisis:

reversing the decline in American literacy

Ross W. Winterowd
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The Politics of the Crisis

Subscribe to any newspaper and you will speedily encounter a headline informing you that youngsters are decreasingly able to read and/or to express themselves in written English. From all appearances, the language arts are in crisis, and even though the crisis seems to involve all of the language arts, we will here concentrate on writing ability. The gloomier pundits prophesy the time when the book as an instrument of knowledge will be completely supplanted by electronic media, a few monkish scribes will preserve the moribund art of communicating in written language, and talk will be fragments of largely incoherent jive. In order to evade this surrealistic future, many would tell us, we need to get back to basics! This Back-to-Basics rallying cry has become politicized.

In fact, something is happening in the language arts although our evidence regarding the situation is fragmentary and largely enigmatic. That is the first important point: we just don't have a very good idea about what is happening. If the American Medical Association based an assessment of the nation's health on a study of the incidence of dandruff and acne among a statistical sample of the population, we would be highly skeptical of any conclusions. But, as a matter of fact, studies of youngsters' abilities to write concentrate largely on the metaphorical dandruff and acne and skirt the organic nature of the process. More about this later.

A second important consideration is this: the teaching of language arts, particularly of reading and writing, is more permeated by myth and dogma than any other subject that the schools are mandated to

include in their curricula. The reasons for this situation are easy enough to understand. In the first place, it is only within the last decade or so that we have started to gain any real comprehension of such basic languaging processes as the child's miraculous ability to master a first language; the equally phenomenal capacity to derive meaning from the kind of irregular black squiggles that you are interpreting right now; and the subtle relationship between spoken and written language. In the second place, the great practical joker--common sense--leads everyone to various conclusions about the ability to read and write. These, in turn, we tend to invest with almost religious certitude, while it transpires that, in some important considerations, our much prized common sense leads us completely astray.

Mix political fervor with a great deal of ignorance, and the result is--well, yes, the result is a situation like the present fervor over the crisis in reading and writing. The political fervor itself has two general manifestations which lead, finally, to the same conclusion: You conservatives say, "Cut budgets, cut out frills, and get back to basics!" And you liberals counter, "Increase budgets so that we can really get back to basics!" And, after all, if basics means nothing more than the ability to read with comprehension and appreciation and to write lucidly and accurately, who can argue against either intention? As you may have guessed, however, things now take a turn for the worse! Too frequently the word "basics" refers exclusively to the acne and dandruff of writing: misspellings, erroneous punctuation, and such. This emphasis shifts attention away from such truly basic matters as coherence, clarity, and logic. If everyone agrees that we must get back to basics, then we must discern what is really basic.

One Basic in Writing Ability

To simplify matters in a necessarily complex discussion, we will take this sentence as an example concerning one ability in writing English:

[1] *It is a fact that Joan is eager to please.*

Of course, we could deal with a whole paragraph or with several pages of writing, but confining ourselves to one sentence has the virtues of both economy and sharp focus, and these ten words are all we need to understand an important principle concerning a basic of writing.

We notice, in the first place, that the sentence is well edited; that is to say, spelling is conventional, verbs agree with their subjects, the end stop is indicated by a period, and so on. The following versions of the same sentence, however, are not well edited.

[2] *it is a fact that joan is eager to please*

[3] *It is a fact that joan are eager to please.*

[4] *It is a fakt that joan is eeger to pleez.*

These examples, of course, contain errors in capitalization and punctuation, verb agreement, and spelling. Such matters are what I like to call surface problems--the dandruff and acne of writing. Even though as purists, which virtually all of us are, we might be offended by the editing failures in (2) through (4), those errors do not keep us from gaining the meaning of the sentence.

But now, if we are to determine what is really basic in this sentence, we must go below this obvious surface and look at what linguists call the deep structure. In fact, there is a great deal more to (1) than meets the eye.

We can see immediately that two sentences have been combined into one. Thus:

[5] *It is a fact. Joan is eager to please. [It is a fact that joan is eager to please.]*

Perhaps not so obviously *Joan is eager to please* is really two sentences, for--and pay close attention to the following linguistic sleight of hand--we have *Joan is eager*, which is obviously a sentence, but we also know who is going to do the pleasing, namely, Joan. Thus, when our minds process for meaning, we inevitably come up with something like this:

Joan is eager [Joan] to please [someone].

All of this complicated discussion serves to make a further extremely important point. The ability to use the syntactic resources of the language to combine and express ideas is obviously more basic than the ability to edit. Suppose that a youngster has not mastered the kind of sentence that we are dealing with here. How, then, can he or she state ideas which are ultimately meaningful only when they are combined syntactically? Suppose, for instance, that a youngster were forced to write

[9] *It is a fact. joan is eeger. She pleases someone. [It is a fact that joan is eager to please.]*
Or compare (10 with (11).

(10) *The girl is nodding in the sunshine. She sits in the desk in front of me. She has pigtails. I like to pull them.*

(11) *Nodding in the sunshine, the girl who sits in the desk in front of me has pigtails that I like to pull.*

Now compare (10) with (12), and ask yourself this question: Which one of the two manifests more basic writing problems?

(12) *Nodding in the sunshine the girl who sits in the desk in front of me has pigtails that I like to pull.* It seems to me that the answer to the question is clear: (10) manifests deep-seated and really basic problems, while the errors in (12)--offensive though they may be--are not basic but involve only the surface features of editing.

Language in Society

If a child can gain the syntactic fluency demonstrated in both (11) and (12), we can be virtually certain that, when a genuine need arises, he or she will master editing skills. Of course, we have here a portentous and complicated qualifier: "when a genuine need arises."

When it does arise, where will it come from? To answer that question, we must briefly detour into sociolinguistics, the study of language as it is used in societies. Clearly, the heavy stress put on editing skills arises from societal expectations. It is not unfair to equate the importance of editing skills with that of other socially imposed norms, such as table manners. There is nothing inherently good or bad about using the proper or the wrong fork, about gentility and noiselessness in chewing, or in suppressing gastric eructation while at table, an inveterate burper might be a saintly genius or the other way round.

(cont. on page 6)

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different we are and make us more aware of how rich-different and also how alike we are.

Marlene Griffith Laney College

Deed of Trust

by Richard Barnes

It is a lot easier to remember the times I've been wrong. It's also no trouble, none at all, to recall the times I've known the "right" thing to do but then wavered until the occasion passed. Like an instant replay in a television football game, I can then examine my lost opportunity from various angles and distances. I can pretend to play, to hold the line at all cost, to risk everything for our side. In pretending, I can persuade myself, or other people, that I'm concerned. Pretending, I take no chances.

There have been a few times, though, when I couldn't pretend. Painfully driven by anger, fear, doubt and conviction, left with no other choice, I could not escape. One time was several years ago.

It was a bad time for everyone. It was the week that we heard of the covert bombing in Cambodia, that Saturday, when it started. I was on my hands and knees, pulling weeds in my front yard. There was a chilling, gusty wind, and patchy clouds moving overhead. I remember looking up, my eye caught by a point of bright color, a scarf or cap perhaps, to see our new neighbors from the commune across the street, leaving the old shingled house to climb into an ancient, brightly painted van. They waved and smiled as they left, the muffled explosions of the old engine fading slowly over the noise of the wind in the bare branches and wires over my head. It was an uncomfortable day to be outside, but I wanted to be alone. Pulling weeds is a good thing to do when you're angry. I was angry with everything, the obscenity of the war, my run down house that required constant work, my overdue bills, most of all my job.

It was my job that rankled most. I was then an account executive in San Francisco's financial district. I felt that I was a tailored, gracious, awning parasite, good at flattering people over expensive lunches in pretentious restaurants. It was a job with a big expense account and small, small meaning. But I felt tied to this shabby masquerade because I had a mortgage to pay, a family to feed.

I liked my young friends across

the street, and I envied them. There would be, thank God, no account executives among them. They seemed to be striving for the simple, honest community that I had wanted as a young man, but was not daring enough to build or find. I had my family, and the achievement of nearly twenty years of providing for five people. It was in this commitment to those I loved, and in the struggle for our survival that I had defined myself as a person. There's pride in that. But how often had I surrendered my integrity in that struggle? I could not avoid the certainty that these clear eyed young people were surviving far less dishonestly, less desparately than I had been. So I worked grimly on through the afternoon, through the blowing sand and the uneven, changing light.

That night the wind died down, and it turned quiet and cold. There was a heavy overcast, and it was very dark outside. During supper we watched the news. Masses of demonstrators had clashed with police in cities across the country. Hundreds had been arrested. After the news, we changed to the Boston Symphony. I found a soft chair and started a good cigar. I remember it was during the Brahms that I heard the scrape of the many steps outside on the porch, then the bell. It was our friends from across the street. Their faces were pale and distressed under the porch light. They filed past me to come inside, nodding or briefly speaking. Someone turned the music off. There were too many to sit in our small living room, so we stood waiting silently until they had all come in. There was an uncertain moment as to who would speak, then a quiet young woman began.

Mr. Barnes, she called me. Did I seem so old as that? It's about Dane, she said, her voice distant and uncomfortable. He was picked up in San Francisco this afternoon. He'd thrown a newspaper rack from the sidewalk into the middle of San-some street, in front of a line of mounted policemen moving the crowd back, and one of the policemen had ridden quickly forward and clubbed him down. He had been struck on the head and

was bleeding badly. The line of policemen had moved past him, as he was dropped on the pavement, then other policemen had picked him up and hustled him into a waiting van. He'd later been booked into Northern station, charged with assaulting a police officer. Our friends could not tell where he was now. There was great confusion. Over a hundred people had been arrested that afternoon. He may have been badly hurt, and medical help could be delayed.

They'd called a lawyer, and found that Dane's bail had been set at five thousand dollars. The bail bondsman required ten percent, and they had been gathering the impossible sum of five hundred dollars from friends, and thought they would have it an hour or so. But that still wasn't enough. The bondsman had insisted that someone who was a permanent resident, someone who owned property would also have to sign the bond. They needed someone who would put up their house as a guarantee that Dane wouldn't skip his court appearance. Would we possibly be willing to do that?

After a moment I remembered Dane. It was his dedicated work for months that had created the huge, beautifully tended garden that had emerged from the tangled disorder of an abandoned lot. He was a part time student at Laney, part time play ground supervisor at my daughter's elementary school. I'd talked with him several times. He was a gentle, decent, sensitive young man. My whole family knew and liked him. But our house? We could lose our house. How could these people know what a price we'd paid for this small house?

I looked across the room, meeting my wife's eyes, trying to read her thoughts. After a moment, I asked her if she knew where to find our mortgage. Lois nodded her agreement, and I told them that I'd be over in a little while. They carefully thanked us, and offered to take me to the bondsman's in the van. Then they left to finish collecting the rest of the money. Left alone, Lois and I reviewed our feelings. We knew

nothing about Dane's family. What did that matter? If it were one of our kids, would someone else take such a risk? We hoped they would, if we could not. You start trusting by trusting someone. This was a young man whose character we had confirmed at our leisure, and whose choices and actions had reflected our conscience. If we could not trust him, who would we trust?

Given this situation, what were we good for, if not for this? We were equally apprehensive, equally resolved.

So I put on a jacket, to look more respectable, and joined our neighbors in the old van. They were concerned for my comfort, perhaps for my dignity, as there were no seats except for the driver. We sat on wooden boxes. I remember the smell of the kerosene lamp mounted on the wall by my head, and examined it closely by the reflected lights from the traffic. I remembered such lamps from my boyhood on the farm in Texas.

The bondsman's office was crowded with worried, angry people, well after midnight. We waited our turn, then gathered around the battered desk. In the blue and red neon light from the sign in the storefront window, our new neighbors carefully laid out the dozens of packets of money they had gathered, five hundred dollars in small bills clipped together. Then I signed for my Deed of Trust.

Richard Barnes was born in Norman, Oklahoma, son of a professor and a high school teacher. He dropped out of high school, served as medical corpsman in Japan and Korea, then worked at many odd jobs in civilian life, and is now a management supervisor in San Francisco. Married, with three children at home [one of whom is also attending Laney College], he has been attending classes for several semesters and hopes to prepare himself for a new career in teaching or counseling.

Inside This Box Factory

by Ron Hernandez

The month is August. The days are warm. Inside this box factory it's down right hot.

Fast! Hurry! Drain the ink, wash out the troughs, open the four sectional monster to expose its cold steel innards. Remove the dies which printed "Libby's Frozen Peas," and replace them with the larger "Bud of California" dies. Wash the old ones and hang them in their rack. Back to the machine to put the ink buckets into their places.

Check the viscosity; too thick and it'll not pump properly and smear the dies; too thin, it'll make the print appear watery. Set the pumping rate, too high and ink will splash over the roller putting "pecker tracks" on the newly printed boxes. Too little ink flow and the rollers will run dry. Hurry! Faster! Production! Production! Set the rollers which pull the boxes through the big monster. Set the knives to cut the box to length and cut the

slots between top and bottom flaps. Set the glue tabs to three inches. Adjust the rails that glide the box as it is folded making sure the glued side folds first. Set the slammer which straightens the boxes as they move on to the counter. Set this! Set that! Look at the clock! I can feel my stomach acting up. We're running late!

Damn, forgot the front of the machine! Adjust the feeding hopper to the proper length and the guide bars so that only one box will be taken at a time. Set the kicker to the proper width to grab the lowest board and push it into the machine. Don't forget the feed roll. Too much crush and the box will lose its strength of corrugation. Too little and the box'll slip as it enters the machine. Time's a wasting! Close the machine and jog one box through. Center the print and make adjustments on the pressure of the dies to be sure all that's to be printed is looks good. Call the foreman to check it out. He says fine and we're off!

"Hey! Where's my helper?" No answer. "This is 300 lb. test board! Where's my helper?" Joe the foreman responds, "Sorry Hernandez, we're short so you'll have to work alone." "Christ! What do they think I am? A machine? Each box weighs over two pounds and the order is for 36,000!" "Yeah, that's exactly what they think I am. They could give a damn about Ron. It's this back they're after!"

Pa-boom, pa-boom, pa-boom, faster and faster it goes. The foreman asks sarcastically, "Can you handle it Hernandez?" I don't reply. Along with feeding the monster

its meal of cardboard, I have to be careful of the level of boxes in the hopper. Too high and their weight will cause the kicker to slip, causing a jam-up. Too low and the boxes will bounce in the hopper again causing a jam-up. I also watch the level and condition of the ink in the buckets and between the rollers, the condition of the blue tabs, the slots, the print... Watch this! Watch that! Pa-boom, pa-boom. What the hell am I doing here? Pa-boom, pa-boom. Keep up! Keep up! Damn this place! Three boxes a second, that's 240 lbs. a minute!

My arms, shoulders and back are on fire and my body is crying for rest. Still the monster demands to be fed. My head begins to spin and my vision goes black. I cling to the machine and hear the moan of transfer belts. Someone pushes the stop button. Boxes have jammed all the way back to the front of the machine. It'll take at least 20 minutes to clear the mess.

The foreman comes and asks who's the "dumb bastard" who let this happen. I tell him I'm responsible and turn the machine down to a more reasonable speed, assuring him that if he so much as looks at the speed control, I'll break his hands. He seems to believe me as much as I believe myself and the order is completed without me blacking out again.

Within three weeks I'm in the hospital having a hernia repaired. While recuperating I decided to go to college to remove the possibility of ever being someone's "back" again.

Born in Woodland, California, Ron Hernandez went to schools in Texas, Nevada, and California. He says he couldn't relate at all to high school [in Lake Tahoe] where he was the only minority student; he came to live with his grandmother in Sacramento and graduated from Continuation School there. He has worked as janitor and dishwasher, and then in the box factory described here. After he left that job, he taught Hapkido [a Korean

martial art], worked in the shipyards, and returned to school where he earned a certificate in refrigeration technology. He is now working part-time as a refrigeration technician and going to school; he hopes to transfer to San Luis Obispo College. Recently Ron has become increasingly involved with La Raza; he enjoys working with people, which he hopes to combine with his future work as a refrigeration engineer.

My Children's Names

by Catherine Moore

I was in the sixth grade in Alexandria, Louisiana, at Reed Ave. Elementary School. My teacher brought her children to school. I asked her what are their names. She told me their names and I forgot. I knew right then, if I ever had any children I wanted them to have long and odd names. March of 1965 was a bad month for me. My mother told me I was pregnant. On June 30, 1965, my mother, brother, nephew, niece and I left Louisiana and came to California.

We lived at thirty-three-O-four Grove Street. My mother was helping me to pick out names for the baby. My first baby was born Dec. 20, 1965 at Highland Hospital, a seven pounds thirteen ounces baby boy. I wanted to name him Nelson Christopher Columbus Theodore Roosevelt Hones, but the line on the birth certificate was too short. I named him Nelson Christopher Theodore Jones.

On August 14, 1966 I married Benjamin Moore. I was married for four years before the second baby came. She was born at Merritt Hospital, a seven pounds eleven ounces baby girl. I named her Aleta Quela Antonette Veronica Letrice Moore. I got Veronica from my mother. She was going to name her last baby Veronica, but she had a boy. My sister told me if I had a girl, name her Letrice. I got Aleta Quela Antonette from my oldest brother. I made everyone happy.

I didn't plan to have any more children. A year later, I couldn't fit any of my clothes. I knew something was wrong. My third child was born at Providence Hospital, a six pounds twelve ounces baby boy. I named him Kaulana Hemalu Alii Ailana Kaili Enalu Moore. Kaulana - Heaven and earth, Hemalu - Heaven, Alii - famous, Ailana - Land, Kaili - stone, Enalu - ruler.

My husband and I was on bad terms for about a year. The second year, we left California and went to Atlanta Georgia. A year later my fourth child was born at Grady Memorial Hospital, six pounds thirteen ounces baby boy. I named him Benjamin Moore Jr. My husband asked me to name the baby after him. A year later, my husband and I separated. Every year on my anniversary, I go back to visit him and stay two weeks. On my last visit, my fifth child was on the way. She was born at Alta Bates Hospital, seven pounds one ounce. I named her Mapuwana Halane Leinaale lune Owana Moore. Mapuwana - Heaven flower, Halane - Sweet Rose, Leinaale - small, lune - Star, Owana - Love.

I gave my children odd names because I wanted their names different from the regular names.

Catherine Moore was born in Alexandria, Louisiana, the youngest of six children. She attended elementary, junior high and high school in Alexandria, and then, after her family's move, Technical High School in Oakland. She stopped

school before her graduation, and soon got married. A few years ago she came to Laney College through the Women's Re-entry Program and, she says, "I'm just here trying." She hopes to major in social welfare.

My Bass Guitar

by Jimmy Fuller

The only time I get a good feeling when I plays my bass. It brings me joy and happiness and pleasure. It give me a good feeling that I can play and work the strings. I have a bass guitar. It is red and have two black buttons. And it is very small. It has 4 strings on it. Three of my uncle sings and plays. My first uncle sing and play guitar and bass and

drums. I have another uncle that play bass and guitar. And I have another uncle that just plays guitar. And my father and Grandfather plays guitar too.

Jimmy Fuller lives with his grandparents in Oakland, where he went to Technical High School. He loves music.

You all hear
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The Second R in Crisis: reversing the decline in American literacy

— cont. —

However, it is pure folly to argue that manners, norms of dress, and so on are not terribly important; they are, precisely because society makes them so. Thus also with editing skills in written language. However, I would argue that neither deportment nor editing skills are truly basic in their respective arenas: human character and the ability to communicate ideas through writing. The following two sentences are patent in their absurdity: He's a good man because his table manners are impeccable. She's a good writer because her spelling and punctuation are perfect.

Data Concerning the Crisis

The National Assessment of Educational Progress has just finished its second major study of the writing of 9-, 13- and 17-year-olds. The first study was completed in 1969. The evidence gathered by this major study of a representative population of youngsters throughout the nation is fragmentary and often puzzling, but some conclusions can be drawn from the data.

Over all, during the four-year period from 1969 to 1973, there was no decline in the mechanical skills of young writers. That is to say, the surface (editing) features of the writing have remained in constant state, and the abilities to spell and punctuate are apparently not on the decline; errors in verb agreement and pronoun reference have not increased; pronouns are still as accurate or inaccurate in their reference as they ever were.

However, it does appear that at the 13- and 17-year-old level sentence structure has become less complicated—less mature, less sophisticated, whatever term we choose. It would seem, then, that students in these groups are becoming less able to use the syntactic resources of the language to express their ideas in writing. They are becoming less syntactically fluent. If this is indeed the case, then some really basic problems are on the increase.

Furthermore, there is an apparent decline in over-all coherence of the writings of 13- and 17-year-olds. It should be noted that the test consisted in having the members of the population write impromptu essays, which were then scored on a variety of axes. The results of this scoring present strong evidence that the two groups are not writing as coherently as were 13- and 17-year-olds in the 1969 test.

Coherence, of course, is largely in the eye of the beholder. A stretch of writing that seems perfectly coherent to a teenager may well seem incoherent to an older reader. The increased incoherence that scorers identified could well represent new modes of organization that intense exposure to the electronic media are bringing about. In other words, the fascinating possibility exists that television may be creating new ways of ordering and reporting experience, even new modes of cognition.

Recently the English and Linguistics Departments at USC have proposed a massive study of the writing of adolescents. Possibly our work will begin to provide explanations for the findings of the recent National Assessment of Educational Progress. At the moment, we can only conclude that there is a coherence gap between the way 13- and 17-year-olds express themselves in writing and the way that mature readers perceive that writing. We have reason for concern, for coherence boils down to logic and organization.

Gloom, Doom, and Hope

Perhaps the most discouraging bit of data gathered by the National Assessment concerns the proportions of good to mediocre to bad writers. Between 1969 and 1973

among 17-year-olds, the number of good writers remained essentially the same, but the number of bad writers increased; in other words, the 17-year-old population is becoming increasingly polarized in regard to writing ability. This polarization may well point toward a general polarization of the whole population—an increasing schism between the "haves" and the "have-nots."

among 13-year-olds, on an 8-point scale, the mean holistic score dropped from 5.0 in 1969 to 4.7 in 1973; the percentage of 13-year-olds writing papers ranked 4 or better declined from 79.6 to 7.6.

In other words, if there is not a crisis in writing, at least there is ample cause for concern.

Now, in order to interpret another set of data, we need both crystal balls and serendipity caps: in virtually every respect, nine-year-olds

in the 1973 sample appeared to be better writers than those in the 1969 sample. Dramatic conclusions are easy to arrive at—but they are terribly dangerous. Have educational programs such as "Sesame Street" given the nine-year-olds a leg up in the struggle to master written language? Since language and culture are inseparable, are the declines in ability among 13- and 17-year-olds symptoms of a general revolution against all of the norms of society in the 'seventies? Since the two older groups have had a longer exposure to television, can we conclude that TV is the culprit?

These are intriguing questions, but at the moment they are unanswerable.

Values

Finally, of course, our fascination with unanswered questions, with the mountains of data that are already available, and with the vast quantities of data which we badly need must succumb to a question of values. How much does society value the ability to compose effectively in Edited Standard English? Even more important, how vital is that ability for a youngster's survival in the last quarter of the twentieth century? I can only hint at my personal answer to these questions. Clearly, not everyone needs to write. Just as clearly, the ability to express ideas cogently, gracefully, and honestly is not a prerequisite for success in many areas of our society. Parenthetically, I am almost convinced that writing ability is not essential even to the professoriate, and to support my opinion I simply refer you to many of the scholarly writings that appear in academic journals! On the other hand, as I have said elsewhere, the ability to write effectively in Edited Standard English could well mean money in your pockets and power in your hands.

But all language ability—speaking, reading, writing, listening—has a more basic use than gaining affluence or wielding power. Every human being is isolated in the tight little island of herself or himself. The way out of that island—which is the ultimate solipsism—is through the use of language. Perhaps the most practical reason for gaining the ability is that it provides a way for one to become more human. In other words, I would argue that writing ability has fundamental importance to the human being and thus to the future of mankind.

Of course, I hardly assume that any reasonable person would argue against the proposition that all students should be given the opportunity and encouraged to learn to write effectively.

Getting Back to Basics

Finally we come to the pedagogical and political question

of what we can do to get back to basics. It seems clear to me that sloganeering is destructive. We precisely do not want teachers to get back to such mechanical basics as spelling, punctuation, verb agreement, and so on. On the basis of available evidence, these are in fair health anyway. We need to get back to the basics I have discussed in this essay: the ability to embody ideas in syntactically fluent sentences, the ability to develop ideas coherently and convincingly; and the ability to make written language a tool for the conveyance of ideas rather than a fog to obfuscate them.

Getting back to my basic demand that the front-line teacher in the classroom have some particular skills: in modern linguistics, in the field that I call discourse theory, in reading, and in a variety of other areas. New curricula, new technology, new slogans will be futile; new teachers are essential. I cannot stress too heavily the fact that our knowledge in the areas of reading and writing has advanced light years in the last couple of decades. The firm solutions to some of our problems and the tentative answers to many of our questions are emerging from scholarship currently taking place in the universities, which, after all, are the institutions that train front-line teachers.

In the English Department at USC, for example, thirty students are working on doctorates in what amounts to a new field that will prepare them uniquely to deal with problems in reading and writing, to train teachers, and to design programs. Our doctoral program is unique, though information from throughout the country indicates that other universities are beginning to model programs after ours.

How lugubrious, how frank, can I be? The least I owe any reader who has stuck with me to this point is perfect candor. In my opinion, the great majority of English teachers are abysmally trained for their jobs. They are on the front line of the language arts crisis, but they simply have no weapons for the battle. Graduates of English departments that have singlemindedly promoted the study of literature to the exclusion of all else, these teachers have none of the skills and none of the knowledge which is absolutely crucial for dealing with students who are dysfunctional in some area of language ability. I am convinced that the educational establishment did not engender the crisis, but I am equally certain that the school establishment is unprepared to counter and redress what is going on.

Therefore, we can end where we began, with the question, What's really basic? You already have my answer. Scholarship and training along the lines pioneered in this University's English Department. That is truly basic.

My Blood Ran Cold

By Mel Applebaum,
Foothill College

Listen. I'm not exactly a rookie English teacher. Seven years in various high schools. One year at Texas A. & M. Eighteen years here at Foothill College. Like Zorba the Greek, I thought I'd been through the "whole catastrophe."

Then, last quarter, I was assigned to teach two sections of English 100--Remedial Reading. Thirty students per section. It's all part of our restructured English program here at Foothill. We screen the incoming freshmen, who are required to take "pure" courses of reading or writing if their scores make them ineligible for English 1A. It all seemed to be logical, fair, realistic, innovative, etc. I was all for it.

But I had never taught reading--remedial or otherwise--per se. As an old pro, however, I wasn't too worried. An English class had never whipped me before.

I tell you, my blood ran cold after a month of those 5-day-a-week classes! We used workbooks, took eye exercises, read graphs and maps and bus schedules, learned how to pronounce "y" in front of vowels, filled out questionnaires, read aloud in class, had office visits, and brainwashed ourselves about the importance of reading--both in college and out in the "real" world.

They were frustrated and bored stiff. So was I. I felt as though I were teaching two bunches of recalcitrant third-graders. And they acted as though I were the meanest son-of-a-bitching third grade teacher who ever lived.

Who saved my soul? Good old Truman Capote. I asked the students to buy *In Cold Blood*. Then I worked out a reading schedule of about 25 pages per day. I informed the classes that I would give a true-false test every day, along with a vocabulary test on words in the assignment which they might not know. I showed them how to keep a vocabulary notebook, including phonetic spelling and the sentence in which the word had appeared. The vocabulary notebook, along with the daily quizzes, plus a standardized McGraw-Hill reading test at the end of the quarter, would determine their final grade.

"Now just give me this stuff about no interest!" I admonished. "And don't read ahead. Do your work each day, but put the brakes on after 25 pages."

Well, colleagues, it really worked. They thought I was a blooming genius for having assigned *In Cold Blood*! Almost all the students jumped 15 to 20 percentiles when I gave the Form B test of McGraw-Hill after we had finished the Capote project. One girl rose from the 10th to the 90th percentile. Another, who hadn't taken Form A at the beginning of the quarter, ended up in the 99th percentile! A few of

them stayed about even--but not very many. The results were statistically "amazing."

What did I learn from this experience as a "first-timer" reading teacher? First, the students are a lot smarter and more mature than their initial test scores, their attitudes, their behavior indicate. Second, you accomplish a great deal more by going in depth, rather than by jumping around too much. Third, you have to stay on their butts consistently and make sure they do the spade work each day. Finally, and most important, you have to find a full-length book that is mature, sensitive, realistic, imaginative, linguistically sophisticated, and exciting.

I'd like to wind this up with a few quotes from the student papers which I asked the class members to write. Subject: "The three things which I learned from reading Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* were" "I didn't grade the papers, but I asked every student to come up to the lectern and read his paper in front of the class. They all did it! And we all clapped!"

As Eric Berne says in one of his books, the only two things in this life really worth saying are "Yes" and "Wow!"

Especially when your blood is running cold.

Eliminating Theme Correction Symbols While Emphasizing Thought Processes

by Katherine Hondius
City College of
San Francisco

It is somewhat paradoxical that experienced English teachers can discover new methods of teaching writing when they find themselves in a new kind of classroom setting. Several of us who have been helping students in the WRITING CLINIC at City College of San Francisco have learned new teaching methods while spending nine hours per week (the equivalent of teaching one course) in the WRITING CLINIC. Here in the drop-in CLINIC, where all students of the College can come for help with their written assignments, I have observed the importance students place on mechanical accuracy as opposed to the logical expansion of ideas. From these observations I have worked out three techniques that can reverse this focus of attention--techniques that can be useful in a writing laboratory, as well as in a formal composition class.

Immediately apparent among the students who come to the WRITING CLINIC is a nagging concern with skills instead of with thought processes. Many of the students are convinced that mechanical accuracy is paramount. If by chance they have been told that for years

What I learned from *In Cold Blood* (Excerpts from Student Papers):

- "how the environment in which a person lives can affect their behavior"
- "reading a whole book without quitting"
- "learning vocabulary: phonetic spelling, pronunciation, meaning of the word itself as it is used"
- "I had never read a big book to the end or even really attempted to try to read a big book like *In Cold Blood*. It was a very good experience for me."
- "I learned how and when to use a dictionary."
- "I was able to grasp a slightly deeper insight on the value of life"
- "I learned about the appealing system of the courts"
- "In *Cold Blood* was not just 'another book.' Truman Capote really kept me in suspense throughout the entire book."
- "If I was to murder a family, I would not come back into the country"
- "I learned what an excellent and sensitive writer Truman Capote is"
- "My confidence in reading books has been regained. I thought I had lost it many long years ago"
- "I learned how to really read and understand what I read"
- "Criminals are very smart people"

- "Never leave your keys in your car"
- "In *Cold Blood* was the first book I have ever read completely and with the intent to profit from it"
- "Holding grudges will not undo what has been done. Do not prejudice people by what you have heard about them from others. You cannot calculate the length of your life, so enjoy it to the fullest"
- "The book *In Cold Blood* taught me that money is the root of all evil, that crime doesn't pay, and that crime breeds crime"
- "I learned to read about other people's experiences and to learn from them"
- "I've never had any satisfaction from reading until I was forced to take this course in accordance to the requirements to fulfill an A.A. degree"
- "I learned that men's minds can be very sick"
- "It becomes apparent that both the criminal and the victim are ultimately consumed and destroyed by the crime"
- "By breaking a book up into sections, you understand better"
- "Vocabulary is an instrument"
- "The book taught me how to read more efficiently and to comprehend much more readily than I did before"
- "The book taught me that many people in this world are crazy"

Faulkner could not distinguish like from as if or that Jack London and Fitzgerald were atrocious spellers, they are inclined to view these facts as the peculiar prerogatives of the gifted, who, fortunately, have editors who clear up their prose. Because of their shrewdness, acquired after a dozen or so years of dealing with teachers, students know their essay grades are lowered because of mechanical errors. And if they have had any experience in the business community, they know that out there in the real world a grammatical error can be regarded as a greater blunder than a sleazy thought.

With these experiences to guide them, it is no surprise that students coming into WRITING CLINIC expect the CLINIC instructors to proofread their papers, inserting marking symbols and abbreviations -- up, mm, g, frag, agr and so forth -- above the offending words, or, better still, actually correcting all usage, spelling and punctuation mistakes. But the CLINIC instructors refuse to provide editing services, just as classroom English instructors refuse to be turned into proofreaders. Classroom in-

structors, however, do use standard correction symbols when grading themes, and it is this practice that I have begun to question. When I notice the way students glance at correction symbols on their compositions and then perfunctorily make the necessary mechanical changes, it seems to me extremely doubtful that a learning experience has taken place.

Certainly, from a practical standpoint, it is advisable for students to learn writing skills. Stylistically, too, knowing the rules can make sense, for recognizing the syntactical importance of word order is a way of clarifying thought. For instance, instructors reading a sentence like this one -- *The eager for fame playwright spoke to the woman who he should appeal to who is lamenting the overnight with difficulty -- might jot down a marginal comment (come again), or might resort to mm, gr, awk or clar. But sometimes we fail to inform students that knowing the proper placement of modifiers and the standard syntactical patterns in the English language would prevent anyone from writing such a sen-* (cont. on page 8)

Sacramento Scene

by James Cagnacci

City College of San Francisco



During the current legislative session, educators are awaiting the reintroduction of two bills that were introduced in the Legislature during 1976. Both bills were the subject of an interim hearing on November 17, 1976, by the Assembly Permanent Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education, chaired by Assemblyman John Vasconcellos. The substance of both bills continues to be discussed for possible reintroduction.

The first bill--AB 4430 by Vasconcellos--was primarily a pro rata pay bill. In effect it seriously discriminated against full-time community college instructors by prohibiting them from teaching any units in addition to their regular assignment.

Eliminating Theme Correction Symbols

(cont. from page 7)

tence. Sometimes the syntactical "rules" are related to logic and style. Likewise, the avoidance of comma splices, faulty pronoun references and other mechanical errors demonstrably result in a greater clarity of thought. So my plea is not to ignore skills; it is to propose a new way of dealing with mechanics in student writing.

While working with students in the WRITING CLINIC, I realized that labeling errors with the traditional correction symbols did not ensure learning. Soon I began to select those students whose previous or current English course work gave them sufficient knowledge of grammar and mechanics so that they could benefit from another type of marking technique. While going over their papers with them, I began circling words that were wrong (wrong for any reason -- diction, grammar, spelling) and circling punctuation marks and the spaces of omitted punctuation marks. The students were not told what types of errors they had made, only that the encircled words or spaces needed to be corrected. At first there was some resistance and objection to their dealing with circles instead of correction symbols, but in time the students accepted and appreciated the fact that I was not a proofreader, that RO, cap, CS con and other marks would not be made on their papers, that circles would be used to spot their mechanical problems, and that they had to both identify and correct their mistakes. The circles on the students' papers forced them to think; the encircled words also persuaded many students to consult their rhetoric handbooks so that they could study the principles or rules involved.

The second bill--AB 4272 by Montoya--was an attempt to clarify the classification of instructors in the community colleges. Three brand new categories of credentialed employment were delineated in this bill: part-time employee, part-time contract employee, and limited-service employee.

With all the confusion presently existing in the area of part-time employment, much of it due to the decision rendered by the State Court of Appeals in the recent Coffey Case, we can be sure several bills will be offered in this area. The Board of Governors of California Community Colleges is currently preparing guidelines to be suggested to legislators as the basis for bills they will be introducing.

Similar to the circling method is another change in marking technique that can be instructional for those students with sufficient course background. This is the underlining method. I began to underline all sentences or parts of sentences (but not single words) that needed revision, for whatever reasons. Instead of writing dangling, jargon, or clarity in the margin, students were confronted with underlined clauses, phrases or sentences that had to be rewritten -- for reasons which they had to discover for themselves. Faced with both circles and underlined passages, the students began to scrutinize their writing and to develop self-critical capacities, the best prerequisites for writing improvement.

By following these two time-saving methods for noting mechanical errors in compositions, instructors can devote more time to important concerns: the content, style and over-all organization of the papers. When student essays are filled with jumbled ideas or irrelevancies, when there is no logical introduction from which ideas can progress, and when ideas are inadequately developed, then, clearly, circles and underlined passages will not straighten out stubborn writing problems. In fact, it is a disservice to students to allow them to believe mere changes in words can correct themes that suffer from an unimaginative treatment of subject or that are marred by faulty or weak thought processes. Often students should begin again; they need to restate the controlling idea, to reexamine topic sentences, and to check the steps taken in support of the main assertion.

At a Reading

The renowned teacher-poet was reading a work of his own

(one long cry)

to thirty other poems:
some were blank verse, a few were quite free,
the rest were traditionally rhymed,
right on time, lemon and lime
a la mode
when in walks this perfect love sonnet.

In no time at all,
this fourteen-line poem

(wonderfully scanned)

put her seat
on her seat.

The teacher paused, then asked, "Now,
where was I?"
The sonnet just smiled and replied,
"You wouldn't believe I!"

A few poems laughed
as the bell rang & rang in the head of the poet,
who came back on the up-beat:

"Don't forget,
you don't have to be psychic
to read

or do miracles
to write poems,
but it sure helps
to be able
to
my dear readers...."

by Salvatore Salerno, Jr.
Fresno City College



Letter to the Editor

Articulation Breakdown?

Dear Editor:

In accordance with the information received at the English Council in April of last year and subsequently reaffirmed in November, the San Diego area community colleges have moved to increase composition in the first two semesters of freshman English (heretofore considered English 1A and 1B).

On March 1, the San Diego State University State Council promulgated a new general education program which not only fails to call for six units of composition, but also makes it possible to avoid taking even one semester of composition offered by trained writing professionals. The basic skills option which does sanction a second writing course overlooks our efforts in Composition and Literature (1B) and dictates that we adopt new courses, such as Intermediate Composition, to meet the needs of the masses of students seeking entry to San Diego State. Furthermore, the nine units in the humanities once allowed students to take any course in literature. Now the restrictive new general

education policy limits the students' choices to world literature or a new sophomore course which "introduces" literature. This change effectively eliminates American literature and English literature.

We are writing, therefore, to lodge a strong protest against this unilateral decision by one state university's Academic Senate. Inasmuch as the area community colleges send San Diego State more than half of its junior class, we have emphatically requested that regional representatives be consulted in the future when decisions of such import are made.

At the upcoming fall conference of the CSUC Council, we anticipate placing this issue on the agenda. We also encourage others of you whose curricular ships may have been capsize by the ripple effect of similar state college actions to use this journal as a forum for exchanging and gathering evidence on matters which concern all of us.

Julie Hatoff, Mira Costa College
Mary Nona Dorn, Southwestern College

ECCTYC Officers, San Diego Region

ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGES